REVIEW-CHRONICLE

OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN BELARUS IN 1999

INTRODUCTION: GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The year of 1999 was the last year of Alexander Lukashenka's original mandate. In 1994 having used the machinery of democratic procedure he was elected president of the Republic of Belarus for five years term. But in 1996 A.Lukashenka conducted illegal, non-free and unfair referendum and by it prolonged his mandate to seven years.

Constitutional Court's judges and deputies of the Supreme Soviet that resisted to A.Lukashenka's dictatorial intentions were dismissed. Thus provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus were broken. Attempt to conduct presidential elections done by the legitimate Supreme Soviet of the 13th convocation was supported by the most influential opposition parties and movements. But Belarusan authorities did their best to prevent opposition from succeeding in presidential elections and subjected people involved in election campaign to different kinds of repressions. Regime didn't balk at anything in the struggle with its opponents. Detentions and arrests, persecutions of its organisers and participants, warnings, penalties and imprisonment followed every opposition-organised action… Yet the year of 1999 became a year of mass actions of protest of Belarusan people against a union with Russia imposed by the authorities to the people. In 1999 the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus made an attempt to arrange talks between Belarusan authorities and opposition. This year will go down to history as a year when some of prominent politicians and fighters against the regime disappeared, when unprecedented number of criminal proceedings against opposition leaders and participants of mass actions of protest was instituted...

The Human Rights Centre "Viasna" puts that in the year of 1999 the situation with human rights in the country has worsened in comparison with last year. Within this year the HRC "Viasna" again and again recorded numerous human rights violations by Lukashenka's regime. As a result of this work appeared this "Chronicle-Review…"

PERSECUTION OF THE ORGANISERS AND PARTICIPANTS OF THE OPPOSITION MASS ACTIONS OF PROTEST

The right to peaceful assembly and association in Belarus is limited by A.Lukashenka's regime with the help of different kinds of laws, edicts and decrees. The law "About meetings, rallies, demonstrations and pickets" is standing out among them. It strictly regulates conduction of mass actions and sets discrimination measures against organisers and participants of the opposition mass actions of protest. On 9 September 1999 A.Lukashenka signed a decree №36 "About some preventive measures against emergency situations during mass actions." Formal cause for this decree was the tragedy on Nyamiga on May 30 in Minsk. However, in fact it was directed against opposition-organised actions. Under this decree the conduction of mass actions is forbidden (except for official and state actions) nearer than 200 meters from metro stations; more strict requirements to the organisers of mass actions and to the officials involved into authorisation of this actions were introduced by this decree. When this decree entered into force the authorities picked out a "reservation" for the opposition-organised actions – remote from transport routes Bangalor Square.

All opposition-organised actions were held under authorities' strict supervision. For this purposes the authorities used not only the militia but also special military troops, security services and KGB officers in civil. Meetings, rallies and pickets were recorded. It was mainly the militia, which set barrage cordons on the way of peaceful rallies and by force, took out the marchers from the ranks, provoked clashes between the marchers and militiamen. It should be pointed out that this year the courts have passed maximum possible sentences to participants and organisers of mass actions. Thus maximum possible penalties and detentions were passed.

On January 11, a trial over Valery Shchukin – prominent journalist and a deputy of the 13th Supreme Soviet – on the administrative case was held in the Minsk Savetski district court. V.Shchukin was charged with participation in the action, which took place on December 25 and was aimed against Belarusan-Russian integration. The detention report says that militiamen asked V.Shchukin to leave the road but V.Shchukin categorically refused and started crying: "Long live Belarus!" On the trial V.Shchukin made a speech in which he accused the militiamen of breaking 8 criminal and 6 administrative articles while they carried out a detention of him. But Judge A.Gancharyk found V.Shchukin guilty and sentenced him to 10 days in administrative detention.

On January 17, the Social Democratic Party "Narodnaya Gramada" staged a march and a meeting against integration with Russia. The applicants of this action had planned

to march from Yakub Kolas Square to Kastrychnitskaya Square and to hold there a meeting. The Minsk City Executive Committee didn't permit to stage a meeting in Kastrychnitskaya Square referring to the decision on "a particular position" of this Square (it's situated nest to the Presidential Administration).

Thus the meting of Social Democrats with participation of other democratic forces took place in Paryzhskaya Kamuna Square.

On January 18, secretary of the Board of the BPF Anatol Kryvarot was detained during the picket, staged by the Belarusan Popular Front "Adradzhennie" for participation in the meeting on December 6 dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He had been identified on the pictures, taken by special services while taking part in the above-mentioned meeting. Judge Anatol Barysionak warned A.Kryvarot.

On January 21, trials over activists of the Belarusan Popular Front "Adradzhennie" (Mikalai Antsypovich – senior lecture of the Philosophy chair, Belarus' State Politechnical Academy, and Genadz Bankevich – a pensioner) were held in Slutsk, Minsk region. They were charged with participation in an unauthorised rally on November 29 when the 78th anniversary of the Slutsk anti-Bolshevik rising was marked. The buses from Minsk were booked on the name of Mikalai Antsypovich and it was the main ground for Judge S.Pastukhova to come to the conclusion that he was an initiator of this action. Traditionally only the militiamen were called witnesses. Pensioner Genadz Bankevich was in hospital and that's why he couldn't come to the trial but nevertheless judge S.Pastukhova fined him 40 million rouble. Mikalai Antsypovich was fined 20 million roubles.

From January 21 to January 23, the Belarusan Popular Front "Adradzhennie" staged a number of pickets (all in all more than 60) in the capital city and other Belarusan towns against Belarus' incorporation by Russian Federation, and against worsening living conditions and abrupt poverty of the population. The actions were dedicated to the planned on January 21 sitting of the Parliamentarian Meeting of Belarusan-Russian Union.

On January 22, a meeting and a march against signing of the next in turn papers on Belarusan-Russian union sate were held in Minsk. This signing is nothing but violation of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus. The action was organised by the BPF with participation of all democratic forces of the country. At the end of the meeting the militiamen of the Central Administration of Internal Affairs tried to detain Lubow Luniova

– lawyer of public reception of the Human Rights Centre “Viasna-96”, but failed. They wanted to draw up a charge sheet for L.Luniova’s participation in an unauthorised meeting on December 6, dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

On January 23, unauthorised picketing against Belarus’ incorporation by Russian Federation was staged in the Central Square of Barysaw, Minsk region. It was organised by local organisations of the BPF and Belarusan Social Democratic Party “Narodnaya Gramada.” People stood with national white-red-white flags and slogans “Hands off Belarus!” and “I love Belarus!” Alexander Abramovich (chairman of lacal organisation of the BSDP “Narodnaya Gramada”) – one of the organisers of that picketing was taken to a charge office. They drew up a charge sheet for breaking article 167 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus.

On January 23, a picketing against Belarus’s incorporation by Russian Federation took place in Pinsk, Gomel region. City Executive Committee’s permission to conduct picketing was received with two days delay. A worker Yuras Salavey was called to the Pinsk City Administration of Internal Affairs. They drew up a report about the breaking of a decision made by the City Executive Committee. Then Y.Salavey was brought to the city court. The judge Leshchanka reported that Y.Salavey could be sentenced to 15 days in detention or fined from 100 minimum wages to 250 minimum ones.

On January 27, independent and free trade unions of workers and entrepreneurs of different enterprises staged a meeting in Minsk. That day the two main markets of the capital city (Kamarowsky and one based on stadium “Dynamo”) stopped their work to express their solidarity with the trade Unions. The action started at 16.00. Marchers started to converge near the Palace of Sports from different city districts. Approximately 12.000 people took part in the action. At the end of the meeting they adopted a resolution. The participants of the action demand our President and the Government to execute the resolution of the Republican Congress of the representatives of workers and trade unions from 21 May 1998. It says “to stop inflation and price rising, to consider the wages to be the first in turn payment, to cut off taxes, to provide workers and trade unions with access to State mass media.

On January 29-30, Congress of Belarusan Democratic Forces took place in Minsk. The Congress passed a resolution “About the human rights violations in Belarus”. “The Congress considers prosecution for political view points to be inadmissible and therefore demands to release all the prisoners of conscience immediately, including Alyaksei Shydlowsky, Uladzimir Kudzinaw, Andrei Klimaw, Uladzimir Pleshchanka. The Congress

demands an unbiased consideration of Tamara Vinnikava, Vasil Lyavonaw and Vasil Staravoytaw' cases to be conducted" - says the resolution adopted by the Congress.

On February 11, a picketing against illegal detention of Andrei Klimaw who had been kept behind bars on pre-trial detention for one year was held on the crossroads of the streets Garadski Val and Nyamiga, which is not far from Minsk cutody centre. Andrei Klimaw is a deputy of the 13th Supreme Soviet. He was arrested on 11 February 1998. This picketing was organised by A.Klimaw and Uladzimir Kudzinaw's wifes – Tatsyana Leanovich and Zoya Kudzinava correspondingly. Representatives and activists of the United Civic Party, public initiative "Charter-97," Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96," relatives and friends of political prisoners took part in that picketing. People stood with slogans saying "Today they are illegally imprisoned – tomorrow will be you!" and "Freedom to deputies A.Klimaw and U.Kudzinaw!"

On February 18, an activist of the Belarusan Helsinki Committee and simultaneously a leader of the local organisation of the Belarusan Social Democratic Party "Narodnaya Gramada" Alexander Abramovich stood trial in Barysaw city court. He was brought a verdict 10 days in administrative detention. A.Abramovich was charged with breaking the article 167 (p.2) (unauthorised picketing, which he held on 23 January in the central Square of the town). On trial Alexander Abramovich pleaded not guilty. Papers for conducting the picket were submitted in time (on 5 January) but the Barysaw City Executive Committee did not authorise it.

On February 21, Uladzimir Vyalichkin – a representative of "Viasna-96" Brest branch, was detained by a militia sergeant Baravik on the city warehouse market. The reason of detention was an attempt to hold a picket on the market place. All the papers for holding a picket against Belarus' annexation by Russian Federation submitted to the Brest City Executive Committee were refused by it. The City Executive Committee referred to the resolution №887 from 15.10.1998. According to this resolution the only place to stage any pickets and meetings is the stadium "Budawnik" (placed far from the centre of the city). But regardless of prohibition U.Vialichkin came out on the market place with placards saying "the 16th of May is the date of Presidential elections" and "No! To any unions". Ales Akhmach, a pupil of the Brest secondary school №23, was also detained and brought together with U.Vialichkin to the Brest Moscow Department of Internal Affairs. The militia lieutenant Levanovich drew up a report and released the detained.

On February 27, antifascist action – a meeting and a march called "Crush the fascist reptile!" was held in Minsk. The Belarusan Helsinki Committee, Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96" and public initiative "Charter-97" initiated this action. About 3 thousand

people took part in this march and meeting. Participants represented mainly Jewish, Tartar and Ukrainian communities. After the meeting people in civil started detentions. Vasil Pashkovich and Uladzimir Rusnak – members of the Belarusan Popular Front, a minor Alexander Yuryn together with his friend who were holding a placard “Charter-97” were detained. The initiators of the action – V.Kostka (Belarusan Helsinki Committee), A. Byalatsky (Human Rights Centre “Viasna-96”), Z.Bandarenka (“Charter-97”) were given subpoenas.

On March 1, initiators of antifascist action “Crush the fascist reptile” Ales Byalatsky, Zmitser Bandarenka and Valery Kostka stood trials in Minsk City Administration of Internal Affairs (at Kamarowsky market). Ales Byalatsky was convicted under art. 167 (p.2) of the Criminal Code and was sentenced to 10 days in administrative detention. Trials on Z.Bandarenka and V.Kostka were put off till March 4. On that very day A.Barysionak, a judge of the Central Court, put off hearings Uladzimir Rusnak and Vasil Pashkovich’s cases till March 10.

On March 2, in the location of the Magiliow regional organisation of the BPF “Adradzhennie” there was held a convention of the regional branch of the BPF. At about 19.30 militiamen interrupted the convention with majors U.Yermakow and U.Chumakow at the head who burst into the room. Militiamen searched a house without search warrant and seized a series of materials “containing the calls for forcible overthrow of the power”. They drew up a report. To justify themselves the militiamen referred to the “Declaration” by Zyanon Paznyak, which was prepared two years ago. The militiamen put down the names of convention participants.

On March 19, A.Kaputski and I.Baikovich – the activists of the BPF “Adradzhennie” were detained in Maladziechna (Minsk region) while holding a picketing devoted to the 81st anniversary of the declaration of the Belarusan People’s Republic. They were brought to the City Administration of Internal Affairs and drawn up reports. A.Kaputski and I.Baikovich were charged with breaking the article 173 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus (distribution of printed editions with breaking the established order and without imprint data). They have been kept there for three hours and ordered to come to the City Administration of Internal Affairs on March 21. Lieutenant Tsimashenka drew up the report.

On March 21, a picketing against the impoverishment of the Belarusan population was held in the town’s park of Smargon’ (Grodna region). It was organised by Alyaxei Dzergachow who held the placards saying “Are you satisfied with the lies? Adherents of the regime, stop listening to the nonsense!” etc. On March 24 the District Administration

of Internal Affairs drew up a report saying "A.M.Dzergachow was the initiator of the picketing and held placards insulting the constitutional system of the Republic of Belarus and the honour and dignity of the president. A video film attached the administrative record of proceedings. A.Dzergachow was drawn up a report and offered to make for the judge Dzyameshchyk who started the consideration of the case.

On March 28, a meeting devoted to the 81st anniversary of the declaration of the Belarusan People's Republic was held in Minsk. Detentions began immediately after the meeting. In all there were detained 8 members of the Young Front. Among them were Ya.Afnagel, Yu.Lisowskaya, A.Sivalob, U.Antonaw, S.Karashchanka, Z.Bunchuk, L.Ambrazevich and A.Mikus. It should be said that among detained people there were four under aged). The formal reason for detention was "using unregistered symbols" (the flag of Young Front). All the arrested persons were brought to the Savetsky district's Administration of Internal Affairs, where they were forced to write explanations. Then the reports were drawn up, by which the detained people were accused of breaking the article № 167 (p.2) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus. Under aged people were set free in 3 hours, but their cases were directed to the Committee on cases of under aged persons. Liskowskaya, Afnagel, Antonaw and Sivalob were brought to the special isolation ward in Akrestsin Street. Then Yu.Liskowskaya was released after she gave written undertaking to come to court on March 29. The rest of the group was kept in the isolation ward till the trial.

On March 29, Ya.Afnagel, Yu.Lisowskaya, A.Sivalob, U.Antonaw, S.Karashchanka, Z.Bunchuk, L.Ambrazevich and A.Mikus stood trial at Minsk Savetsky district Court. They were accused of breaking the provisions of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus and fined 5 million roubles everybody.

On 2 April, a rally and a meeting against re-stationing nuclear weapons in Belarus took place in Minsk (initiator of the action – the Belarusan Association of Young Politicians (BAYP). The city authorities allowed merely holding a meeting on the Paris Commune Square in front of the Belarus' Opera and Ballet House. However, the people gathered on Yakub Kolas Square. Anatol Lyabedzka, deputy of the 13th Supreme Soviet and head of the BAYP, urged the participants to go towards the Opera and Ballet House - the allocated place for meeting. Arrests of meeting participants took place straight after the end of the action. 20 people were taken into custody, there were also some teenagers among them from 12 to 14 years old. The detained were taken to the Minsk Savetski district Administration of Internal Affairs. The under-aged guys were let go

afterwards but the other 11 participants were kept in the special custody centre in Akrestsin Street until the trials.

On 5 April, Anatol Barysenak, judge of the Central district court, gave a warning to Lyavon Sadowski. The Minsk Savetski district court passed the following sentences:

1. Lyabedzka Anatol (initiator of the action) - subject to administrative fine of 75 million roubles (about $250);

2. Kharkina Svyatlana (Young Front, 19 years old) - subject to administrative warning;

3. Lukoika Stanislaw - subject to administrative fine of 10 million roubles (about $ 35);

4. Kaparykha Mikalai - applied for a lawyer and in this connection the trial was postponed until 6 April 1999 - subject to administrative fine of 10 ml. roubles;

5. Snapkouski Anatol - administrative sentence for 5 days;

6. Radkevich Uladzimir (retired, 61 years old) – administrative warning;

7. Slyshkin Uladzimir - fine of 10 ml. roubles;

8. Auramenka Anton – fine of 10 ml. roubles;

9. Rychard Karostsik – fine of 10 ml. roubles.

On 6 April, Syargei Antonchyk, head of the Belarusan striking committee, was detained at 8 a.m. in the city of Orsha. S.Antonchyk was on a one-day business trip in Orsha where he visited a number of local plants and enterprises. He had meetings with workers in order to organise a countrywide strike on 15 April 1999. He was delivered to the local court and incriminated holding an unauthorised meeting. The public prosecutor insisted on a 7-day term sentence for S.Antonchyk. All of a sudden it became known that Genadz Karpenka died. S.Antonchyk said to the judge that he would serve a 20-day sentence provided that the judge let him attend G.Karpenka's funeral. The judge agreed to free Antonchyk on condition that he would immediately return to the court after the funeral.

On 13-14 April, S.Antonchyk, head of the Republican striking committee, stood trial in Orsha. Valyantsin Stefanovich and Uladzimir Padgol, public defenders of Human Rights Centre “Viasna-96”, pleaded for S.Antonchyk in court. During the trial all witnesses, who at first confirmed that Syargei Antonchyk was the initiator of the rally, changed their

evidence. According to them there was no rally but S.Antonchyk was only answering to the workers' questions at the entrance-office concerning low wages and the ways of their increasing. The judge found S.Antonchyk guilty for answering to the workers' questions and accused him of breaching art. 167.1 of the Administrative Code of RB (violation of the law about rallies). S.Antonchyk was fined 10 million roubles.

On 8,9,12,14 April, Barys Khamaida, editor in chief of the independent newspaper "Vybar", and Uladzimir Pleshchanka, chairman of the local council of the BPF "Adradzhennie", were detained in Vitsebsk by militiamen for the same "breach of the law". They stood in the lively place of a centre of the city and sold independent and opposition newspapers. B.Khamaida held a placard saying "Independent newspapers". Every time after detention they were drawn up reports for taking part in an unauthorised picketing and kept in charge office up to three hours. A trial, which took place after their first detention (on 8 March), found them innocent.

On April 14, Stsyapan Serabro, an activist of the Belarusan Popular Front, was detained in Vitsebsk. They found in his pocket one US dollar with his own image instead of that of the US president. They instituted a criminal case against S.Serabro for breaking Article 84 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (manufacture and imitation of money in order to sell and get profit). According to a lawyer – it is nothing but an infringement of the law and violation of the human rights because S.Serabro didn't even intend to sell this "banknote". It should be mentioned that the "banknotes" of this kind are obtainable in the stalls all over the country. During interrogation S.Serabro was beaten and persistently asked whether this "money" was handed to him by the editor in chief of the newspaper "Vybar" Barys Khamaida.

On April 14, militiamen searched a flat of Stsyapan Serabro at midnight in the presence of Syargei Serabro (Stsyapan Serabro's brother) in Vitsebsk. Militia inspector carried out a search. They confiscated a computer, a printer, 50 disks, and issues of the newspaper "Vybar", a letter by Khamaida to the Jews world-wide to support U.Pleshchanka who had been groundlessly kept in custody for seven months. They carried out a search as though on the basis of an instituted case against S.Serabro for breaking Article 84 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus. This search was nothing but the breach of the law. According to the Belarusan legislature the search was to be held by an investigator who deals directly with this case.

On 15 April, a computer of Syargei Serabro was confiscated from his working place. On this very day the brothers Syargei and Styapan Serabro were detained and kept in custody for three days. They were accused after being kept in custody 20 hours

(according to the current legislation it must to be done after tree hours of detention). Syargei Serabro went on hunger strike.

On 15 April, the trials over Yury Khadyka and Galina Kunina -- participants of the anti-nuclear rally which was held on 2 April 1999 were postponed. The Judge Ludmila Savastsyan was taken to hospital. On 2 April, Y.Khadyka, deputy chairman of the BPF "Adradzhenne”, was on Yakub Kolas Square, from where the anti-nuclear rally began. From Yakub Kolas Square Y.Khadyka together with his wife, sister and friends went to Yanka Kupala theatre to watch the play called “Costumier”. And on 14 April, the militia officers came to Y.Khadyka's flat and drew up a report for taking part in the unauthorised rally and procession and wanted to take him to court. But Y.Khadyka appealed for an advocate to plead for him in court so the trial was scheduled for 15 April at the militia department No 1 (near Kamarouski market). The trial of Galina Kunina was also scheduled on this day, who was severely beaten by the people in plainclothes during the anti-nuclear action and was in hospital with contusion of the brain until 9 April. "The trial is being postponed...” - said the judge while being taken by the ambulance.

On 25 April, Chernobyl rally devoted to the 13th anniversary of the tragedy, which had already become traditional in Belarus, took place in Minsk. Eight participants of this rally were taken to the Minsk Savetski district Administration of Internal Affairs. To be exact they even did not manage to take part in the rally. The detained people addressed to the Human Rights Centre “Viasna-96”. Alexander Ungur’s application says: “I was detained by the militiamen at about 12.00 a.m. near the National Academy of Sciences together with V.Brutski, A.Siets’ka, Yu.Meliashkevich (a minor), S.Matskoits, L.Ambrazevich (a minor), A.Lazarchyk and M.Kunina (a minor). The militiamen introduced themselves. They were Yakubovich, Philipovich and Tsimokhaw. We were accused of “unauthorised assembly” and brought to the Savetski district Administration of Internal Affairs. We were kept there for more than three hours without drawing up reports excepting S.Matskoits. We were threatened and subjected to pressure, they humiliated our human being’s dignity and mocked at us”. Mariya Kunina witnessed the following: “We stood near “Kastrychnik” cinema waiting for people who had read leaflets inviting them to take part in Chernobyl rally and to gather near the Academy of Sciences. We wanted to bring them without any excesses to the allowed by the city authorities meeting in Yakub Square”. After the end of the rally the detained were released.

On 29 April, the Minsk Savetski district court warned Galina Kunina for taking part in anti-nuclear demonstration held on April 2. On that very day unknown people wearing civilian clothes beat G.Kunina after what she spent 10 days in hospital.

On May 1, a rally and meeting sanctioned by the city authorities took place in Independence Square in Minsk. Representatives of the Social-Democratic Party "Narodnaya Gramada" led by its leader Mikola Statkevich and those of Free trade unions with Mikhail Marynich at head created a separate column. Representatives of Mikhail Chyhir's crew joined opposition column. Marchers went round of the Independence Square as it was made agree with the city authorities and police administration (at this time in the Square there was held an "official" meeting, whose participants were gathered by special resolution "from above" saying how many people there were to be present, how many flags, placards, President's portraits etc). After that participants of the action broke up. A small group of women singing folk songs remained near the hotel "Minsk". Police official using megaphone tried to out-voice them ordering to stop singing songs, for they, as it turned out, "were breaking the law". Detentions of people from opposition column began straight away after the end of the 1 May demonstration. Mikola Statkevich, Ganna Statkevich (16 year old girl, a daughter of Mikola Statkevich), Igar Simchanka (resident of Brest), Mikhail Gancharyk, Leanid Dzeika, Alexander Abramovich (resident of Barysaw), Mikalai Ustsimenka, Siargey Saldatsenka, Mikhas Arastovich, Sviatlana Gancharonak, Georgii Salamenik, Tsimafei Dranchuk (a minor), Tatsiana Marozava (a minor), Mikhas Marynich (chairman of the Free trade union of metal-workers), Viachaslaw Kozel, Mikalay Zhukowski were detained. Minor participants of the 1 May demonstration were kept in custody centre more than five hours, although in compliance with current Belarusan legislation they could keep them not more than three hours. Three drunk workers by accident got to opposition column and that's why they were also detained. But policemen released them right away and even bottles with vodka gave them back. Why? As it turned out, while drawing up a report policemen were informed that workers were ordered by plant-authorities to participate in the meeting and to cry out against NATO, for what they were promised to have a bonus and one day extra-weekend. On 3 May all the detained were to be tried in the Maskowski district's court for breaking the Article 167 (p.1) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus. The judge Ye.Troinich decided to postpone the trials on 5 May to better familiarise herself with this case. On 5 May the trials were stopped because the detained were found not guilty.

On 5 May, Valery Shchukin, journalist and prominent human rights activist, was tried in the Minsk Savetski district court for taking part in anti-nuclear demonstration held on 2 April. He was brought a verdict – five days in administrative detention. The judge allowed him to celebrate the Victory Day, May 9. On May 10 Valery Shchukin made for custody centre. Being in custody Valery Shchukin decided to express his will and to vote for one of

the candidates for presidential office. On May 13 representatives of the Central Election Commission drove up to the custody centre but in vain. V.Shchukin was refused to realise his suffrage.

On 24 May, a meeting in support of the former Prime Minister Mikhail Chygir was held in Yakub Kolas Square in Minsk. Yuliya Chygir, wife of Mikhail Chygir, reported people that the 24th of May is a birthday of her husband. It was May 24 when Mikhail Chygir was informed that his term of detention would be prolonged by two months.

On 6 July, the workers of joint-stock venture “Orsha” did not get down to work. They gathered near the plant administration. The reason of the strike was that they got wages last time only in April. The administration of joint-stock venture “Orsha” promised to pay money in July, but it did not respond to the workers’ demand to raise wages twice.

On 6 July, workers of the amalgamation “Mazyrselbud” (Narowlya, Gomel region) went on strike. They didn’t get money from springtime. Average wages is 5-10 million roubles (it is equivalent of $ 10-20 dollars). Every morning workers came to amalgamation with their families and insisted on paying their money. The youngest participant of the strike was hardly elder than one year. Workers say that they have no money to buy even bread.

On 7 July, the workers of the amalgamation “Azot” (Grodna) held a picketing in front of the building of the plant administration. The picketing was organised by independent trade union of amalgamation “Azot”. People demanded administration to raise wages and quantity of holidays in a summer time.

In July, workers of the pedigree plant “Novy dvor” of Svislach district (Grodna region) went on strike. Tractor drivers were first who called the strike and refused to make hay. Then they were supported and joined by cattle-breeders. The matter is people did not get wages last six months.

On 10 July, first National Congress of workers was held in Minsk in the Palace of Veterans. 315 delegates representing 42 cities and towns of Belarus and 287 enterprises took part in this congress. Workers addressed to A.Lukashenka to resign voluntarily on 20 July. In case he does not resign workers promise to start actions of mass protest against illegal usurpation of power.

On 11 July, a meeting of the organising committee members on creation of the Union of Belarusan Officers took place in a sanatorium near Lepel (Vitsebsk oblast). Former Minister of Defence Yuri Zakharanka stated about creation of this non-governmental organisation not long before his mysterious disappearance. After he

disappeared (Y.Zakharanka's fate is still unknown) his work was caught up by his friends and companion-in-arms. During the meeting officers discussed tasks and forms of co-operation with the League of Militia Officers.

On 12 July, workers of the Magilew Automobile Plant went on strike again. Not long ago having believed their director (who promised to pay wages for May in the near future) workers suspended the strike. But director went on holidays having not kept his word. The administration of Magilew Automobile Plant promised to pay wages before long again. The workers' reply was as follows: in case you deceive us again the strike is going to be endless.

On 21 July, opposition-organised actions connected with the end of Lukashenka's original presidential mandate took place in Belarus. Mass fete was conducted in Minsk to mark the end of Alexander Lukashenka's five-year presidency in Kastrychnitskaya Square. Arrests and detentions of festive participants began after it was over. People wearing civil clothes were mainly engaged in the process of detentions. A lot of accidental passers-by that were merely passing through the Square were detained. While detaining they beat up many people, humiliated human being's dignity, put on handcuffs. They kept people in custody centre till midnight and didn't allow them to phone home. Especially severely were beaten up the following people: Aleg Vouchak – former investigator, veteran of the Afghanistan war, chairman of the human rights organisation "Legal Assistance to the Population", and senior lecturer of the Belarusan Polytechnic Academy Syargei Kachanowsky. As usually there were a lot of accidentally detained people who didn't take a hand in the fete (for example architect Yawgen Iwlew). A lot of under-aged people were also among the detained. On metro station "Kastrychnitskaya" militiamen surrounded and then detained 7 boys and girls from Mar'ina Gorka (Minsk region) and settlement Druzhny (Minsk region). The detained were brought to the Central Administration of Internal Affairs where they were kept till midnight. The under-aged were released except for Stsyapan Kulchanka who was given a subpoena on 23 July.

On 21 July, seventeen people made a symbolic act in Pinsk (Brest region). They came out to the square in front of the City Executive Committee building with brooms and began sweeping asphalt. They wanted to show by means of this act that the power in Belarus should be changed. All of them were detained.

On 21 July, about two thousand people gathered in Grodna to mark the end of Alexander Lukashenka's original mandate. Leaders of the City Council of the BPF "Adradzhennie" S.Malchyk, A.Astrowski, K.Zhyn' as well as M.Voran, Ya.Lilevich and

editor-in-chief of the newspaper “Pagonya” M.Markevich were detained after celebration. All the detained were given subpoenas.

On 22 July, people detained during and after celebrations dedicated to the end of A.Lukashenka’s five-year presidency stood trial in Minsk. Judge Anatol Barysionak led court hearings in the Minsk Central court. Representatives of the Human Rights Centre “Viasna-96” Valyantsin Stefanovich and Uladzimir Padgol were present at trials as public defenders. Only militia officials were called to witness. Central court considered the cases of Anatol Grykhutsik (engineer), Yan Gryb (pensioner), Syargei Kachanowsky (senior lecture, Belarus’ Polytechnic Academy), Natallya Kachanowskaya (teacher of English, Belarus’ Polytechnic Academy), Victar Belaskow, Mikola Zanka (human rights activist from Gantsevichy), Ivan Suntsow (engineer, Russian citizen). All the detained were warned by judge A.Barysionak.

On 22 July, the militiamen didn’t let to the court hearings, which were to be jeld in the building of the Minsk Maskowski Administration of Internal Affairs, press representatives and those of the HRC “Viasna-96” Andrei Yurevich and Barys Gyunter. Syargei Salash (member of Malady front, Barysaw), Alyaksei Simanenka, Syargei Abramovich, Syargei Kalinin, Anatol Askerka (member of the BPF “Adradzhennie”, Barysaw), Aleg Vouchak, Alyaksei Lapitski (Zhodzina), Paval Znavets (deputy of the 13th Supreme Soviet), Leanid Sevasts’yanchyk, Barys Muski were the defendants.

On 22 July, Valery Shchukin prominent human rights defender and the deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the 13th convocation was taken in charge in the building of the court of the Minsk Leninski district. The trial over the entrepreneur and the deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the 13th convocation Andrey Klimaw started here. Andrey Klimaw has been in custody since February 1998. Valery Shchukin came to the trial as a journalist. But all of a sudden a problem appeared – all representatives of mass media entered the courtroom except for Valery Shchukin who wasn’t allowed to come in. The militiamen said in so many words that they were ordered not to let Valery Shchukin in. Mr. Shchukin asked them to show him the law where it was written, that “Valery Shchukin can’t be present at trial”. The police sergeant Vyachaslau Furs answered: “I am the law”. This is recorded on the journalist’s Dictaphone. (Valery Shchukin’s Dictaphone was turned on from the very beginning of the conflict). Valery Shchukin was asking for explanations until the lieutenant colonel didn’t give an order to arrest him according to the article 156 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus – small hooliganism. While carrying out the order of their chief the militiamen pushed Hans Georg Wieck the head of the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus. Valery Shchukin was pulled downstairs to the militia car. The deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the 13th convocation Anatol Lyabedzka

tried to defend V.Shchukin – and as a result the militiamen tore his shirt. Valery Shchukin was taken to the police department on Karl Marx Street. The trial on Valery Schukin took place in 2 a.m. The witnesses (militiamen Vyachaslau Furs and Mikalai Shashok) confessed that Valery Shchukin was swearing and fighting in the court building. There was no proof of swearing on the Dictaphone record but nevertheless judge D.Zhdanok sentenced Valery Shchukin to administrative punishment – 15 days in detention.

On 27 July, about five thousand people gathered in Yakub Kolas Square in Minsk to celebrate the Independence Day of the Republic of Belarus, which was cancelled by A.Lukashenka. Minsk City Executive Committee authorised the meeting and pointed out the place of conducting – Bangalor Square. The demonstrators from Yakub Kolas Square went to Kamarowski market and then turned to the centre of the city but failed. The barrage cordon made up of militiamen blocked their way. Demonstration participants were forced to turn to Skaryna Avenue. Militiamen again several times blocked their way. In the end after several attempts to break through the militia line and after strict squabbles people were forced to break up. Arrests began immediately after it. Altogether 40 people were detained. A lot of minors were among the detained. 19 people were taken to custody – in Akrestsin Street. Six women – singers of the women' chorus (over 50 aged), spent night in custody centre.

On 27 July, unauthorised action of protest took place in Barysaw (Minsk region). Local Social Democrats with caricatures of A.Lukashenka in their hands trampled the "state" red-green flag under foot.

On 28 July, people detained during and after unsanctioned celebration of the Independence Day stood trials in the Minsk Savetski District Court. Four judges considered the cases of 15 people, who spent the whole night in the detention centre. The majority was brought to book under the art. 167.1 (part 1) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus. Mikalai Statkevitch (the head of the Belarusan Social Democratic Party "Narodnaya Gramada", the organiser of the meeting on July 27) was taken to court according to art. 167.1 (part 2) (organisation of unauthorised procession) of the Administrative Code. Judge I.Sheika sentenced him to 10 days of the administrative arrest. Uladzimir Kuntzevitch was fined 20 million roubles ($ 45). The cases of Yaugen Kulick (a famous Belarusan artist), Syarzhuk Shmyaliow, Andrei Kastyukevich were put off till July 29, as they applied to have lawyers. There were 9 women among the detained people, most of them of nature age – pensioners. The judge Alyaksei Tamashow didn't satisfy applications to take part in the trials of the public defenders of the Human Right Centre "Viasna-96", Valyantin Stefanovich and Ales Byalatsky. He made the following

judgements: Alena Salawyova – warning, Galina Myadzvedzeva – warning, Vera Tserlyukevich – warning. The judge M.A.Fiodarava brought warnings to Mariya Ignatovich, Lyubow Sakalowskaya and Svyatlana Mamis. The judge Andrei Gancharyk fined all the defendants with 20 million roubles each. Among them: Leta Ustsinovich (a pensioner), Alesya Manahava, Alexander Karalyow, Vera Tsitsyankova. The case of Yawgen Asinski charged with putting up resistance to the militiamen wasn't considered on that day. He was in the custody centre.

On 4 August, Kanstantsin Reznichak stood trial in the Minsk Leninski district Administration of Internal Affairs. He was sentenced to 15 days of imprisonment for breaking the article 167.1 (p.2) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus. The reason was he came out to the presidential residency 38, K.Marx Street with placards saying "15 days without Luka!" and "Lukashenka, games with people are dangerous for health!" Fifteen minutes after it K.Reznichak was detained by militiamen and delivered to the Administration of Internal Affairs of the Leninski district.

On 13 August, Alesya Yusiuk and Nadzeya Grachukha, members of the Belarusan Social Democratic Party "Narodnaya Gramada", were called to the sitting of the administration commission of Barysaw City Executive Committee. They were called to be punished for taking part in the action of protest that took place on 27 July. Girls refused the "offer" and did not go to the sitting of administration commission.

On 13 August, brothers Dzmitryi and Alexander Abramovich were summoned to the Minsk Central district court. They were going to be charged for participation in the feast "Lukashenka's sending-off" on July 21. They refused to appear in the state institution.

On 20 August, court's executor of the Grodna Leninski district inspected the flats of Ales Astrowski, Syargei Malchyk, Mikalai Markevich and Mikalai Voran, who were charged for participation in the action "Good by, President!" in order to distrain their property and confiscate instead of fines they got. The highest fine – 200 million roubles got professor of Medical University doctor Ales Astrowski. He is well known in the medical circles outside Belarus for his investigations and discoveries. He originated the technology of skin transplant operation, which allows to have the best results ten times sooner than it was before. When court's executor inspected the flat of well-known professor he noted that there were nothing to distrain.

On 27 September, an administrative case instituted against Aleg Trusaw, chairman of the Association of the Belarusan language named after Frantsishak Skaryna, was considered on the fourth court sitting in the Minsk Savetski district court. He has been charged with participation in unauthorised rally devoted to the Independence Day on 27

July. Judge I.Sheika headed the first three court sittings. The witnesses of A.Trusaw were interrogated during those court sittings and videotape of events, which took place on 27 September, and proved that A.Trusaw didn't take part in the aforementioned rally, was seen. Different judge headed the fourth court sitting. This time it was a judge R.Kazadaew who didn't start consideration of the case from the very beginning. By doing so he beyond all question broke the law. As usual militiamen were the only witnesses on the trial. Barys Gyunter, representative of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96", was a public defender of A.Trusaw on the trial. The lawyer of A.Trusaw proved his client's innocence and gave evidences saying that A.Trusaw being a reporter of the newspaper "Nasha Slova" and a member of its editorial board merely observed the rally from the street on that day. In spite of that judge warned A.Trusaw.

On 3 September, activists of "Charter-97" held a picket under slogan "Dictatorship's up" in Malinawka – Minsk residential area. Prominent Belarusan politicians took part in this picketing. Among them was Yury Khadyka – deputy chairman of the Belarusan Popular Front "Adradzhennie". Two militia officers came up to Yury Khadyka and gave him writs. One subpoena on 13 September for participation in public feast "Lukashenka's sending off" which took place on 21 July. Another one asked him to come to Savetsky Administration of Internal Affairs to draw up a report. The point is Yu.Khadyka took part in a festive rally on occasion of the Independence Day on 27 July. It gave them possibility to accused Yu.Khadyka of breaking article 167.1(p.2) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus. On that very day Yu.Khadyka learned that he had been fined 150 million roubles on 31 May. A trial took place in his absence. Yu.Khadyka was charged for his interest in meeting held by the Association of Young Politicians. Militia officers took a picture of Yu. Khadyka while he was speaking with young politicians and picture became a ground to charge him. So they charged not Yu.Khadyka but a picture of him… L.Savasts'yan, a judge of Minsk Savetski district, brought Yu.Khadyka to book in his absence. Having done so she broke the article 247 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus and deprived Yu.Khadyka of a possibility to defend himself, to use barrister's assistance. It should be pointed out that it was not the first time when a judge brought a man to book in his or her absence. The Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96" lodged a complaint addressed to the chairman of Minsk City court about the court's resolution. If the chairman of Minsk City court rejects this complaint it will be addressed to the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus.

On 7 September, an action of the Belarusan Liberty Party should have taken place on the 7th of September in Yanka Kupala Park in Minsk. The action was dedicated to the holiday of Belarusan military glory that is celebrated on the 8th of September. More than

100 people gathered near the monument to Yanka Kupala around seven o'clock in the evening. There were lots of young people, many representatives of the independent media, well-known painter Ales' Pushkin and poet Slavamir Adamovitch. No one from the present there had any flags and posters. No one was shouting any slogans. Some minutes later appeared the militiamen. They approached the poet Slavamir Adamovitch who was signing anthologies of his poems. On the people's eyes the militiamen put poet's hands back and tried to push him into the militia car standing nearby. A major of the special militia troops monitored the operation. The militiamen paid no attention on the demand of Slavamir Adamovitch, journalists and observers of "Viasna-96" to give explanations to their actions and the reason of the arrest. People who tried to prevent his arrest surrounded Slavamir Adamovitch. The solders of the special militia troops came to help militia. They pushed people away and took the poet into the militia car. At the same time the youths present in the park set fire to the state flag of Russia. The militiamen rushed to put out the fire and trampled the flag under their foot under the applause of the people. After the action when people went home the militiamen started arresting the people who were present during the arrest of Slavamir Adamovitch and fire of the Russian flag. They recorded all the events on video. Syargei Chyrik the journalist of the newspaper "Belaruskaya Maladziozhnaya" was arrested on Kastrychnitskaya Square. During the arrest he had video camera with the tape on which he recorded all the events. While being arrested he showed his journalist identification card but nevertheless the militiamen arrested him and took to the charge office of the Central district where they took his camera and videocassette. Slavamir Adamovitch was taken to the same militia department. He was kept there till 11 o'clock in the evening and then after the militiamen drew up a report for breaking article 167.1 (part 2). After this he was set free. Seven people were arrested that day, five of them are the members of the Belarusan Liberty Party.

On 8 September, a festive rally of opposition and a meeting dedicated to the Day of Belarusan military glory (485 years ago the troops of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania defeated those of Moscow Principality in 1514 near Orsha). It was planned to conduct a rally, adopted for a stage performance (knight's tournament) and to stage a rock concert of the well-known Belarusan group "N.R.M." This celebration coincided with the official visit of Russia's new Prime Minister Vladimir Putin to Belarus, who on that very day met with A.Lukashenka. The action began from the Paryzhskaya Kamuna Square. Demonstrators carried placards with slogans against unification with Russia. Young girls presented flowers to men congratulating them with national holiday. But the city authorities did their best to prevent opposition from celebration. Before the beginning of a rock concert they suddenly turned off electricity. As a result, the rock concert, which

was expected by the youth, didn't take place. Furthermore, about ten youngsters (representatives of Russian National Unity) tried to provoke peaceful demonstration participants. They clutched at black Belarusan speaking man. But his friends stood up for him. They came to blows and neo-Nazis were forced to back down. Demonstration participants caught two Russian National Unity members and handed them over to the militia.

On 8 September, during festive actions Valery Shchukin, a deputy of the 13th Supreme Soviet and a prominent human rights activist, was "invited" to come to the Central Administration of Internal Affairs on 10 September. V.Shchukin came to Administration of Internal Affairs in appointed time. Deputy chairman of the department for preventive measures and protection of social order spoke to V.Shchukin. The reason of inviting Valery Shchukin to the Central Administration of Internal Affairs, as it turned out, was a return of report drawn up by the militia for V.Shchukin's participation in the feast "Lukashenka's sending off". It demanded the charge sheet to be drawn up in accordance with set form. The point is that police drew up this report in Shchukin's absence what is nothing but a breach of the law. They asked V.Shchukin to give explanations and put them down… It was the first case when militia testimonies were not enough to prove one's guilty and when a report was returned to be drawn up in accordance with set form. So, militia officer didn't find grounds to draw a report and let V.Shchukin go.

On 30 September, actions of protest organised by independent trade unions were held in the biggest cities of Belarus. Fifteen thousand people unsatisfied with the state of things in the country took part in a meeting held in Bangalor Square, Minsk. The action took place in spite of counteractions from authorities part.

On 30 September, Uladzimir Pleshchanka, chairman of Vitsebsk Council of the Belarusan Popular Front, was detained after organised by the independent trade unions meeting. He was detained as though for spreading the newspaper "Nash President" (our president) one issue of which was found by him. During the meeting this newspaper was spread out among meeting participants by unknown person.

On 17 October, a Freedom March was held in Minsk. It resulted in mass arrests and clashes between participants of the Freedom March and special militia troops. Although head of the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus applied to the City Executive Committee with request to authorise a meeting to be held on the Square of Independence it didn't permit to conduct Freedom March from Yakub Kolas Square to the Square of Independence. March participants gathered on Yakub Kolas Square. At

13.00 a column which had about 5-7 thousand march participants made for direction of Bangalor Square. It was quite surprising that one could hardly see a militiaman nearby. The column was joined by passers-by. As a result of it, a short meeting on Bangalor Square had already over 20.000 participants. From Bangalor Square the column made for the Square of Independence to bring there both the national white-red-white flag and that of the European Union. The number of March participants was constantly growing up owing to Minsk residents unsatisfied with the policy run by the Belarusan government and inspired by the number of March participants who were not afraid to show their protest. So, the column of about 30.000 people was approaching Frantsishak Skaryna Avenue. It should be mentioned that March participants behaved themselves in a proper way. When the column stopped before the crossing of M.Bagdanovich St. and Varvashenya St. somebody even joked that it stopped waiting for green light. But in actual fact the column was turned by militia barrier toward Skaryna Avenue. The second barrier waited for March participants on Skaryna Avenue itself. This time demonstrators were not allowed to go in direction of the Victory Square but along Kazlova St. and then Pershamayskaya St. where on the bridge across the Svislach river special militia troops and soldiers of Internal ones were waiting for matchers. According to comments of the Belarusan TV A.Lukashenka supervised the situation development from the very beginning and at 3 o'clock p.m. he ordered to stop the column. So, it was he who was in favour of making short work of the marchers. There were about 5.000 militiamen concentrated along Yanka Kupala St., near the National circus and in the yards of the near houses as well. Meanwhile March participants came up to the barrier made up of special militia detachment and soldiers of Internal troops on the bridge over the Svislach river... Then the column came up to the barrier made up of militiamen and stopped. People stood in front of the barrier shouting at militiamen and asking them "Who do you serve for?" "You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!..." There were no way to go further anymore. And then M.Statkevich suggested, "Let's turn around and go back to Yakub Kolas Square". Demonstrators turned back and made some steps away from militia barrier. Then militia shields made way and soldiers of special militia detachment sprang out and began beating, catching and pulling demonstrators into militia cars. It is natural that people began defending themselves first with the help of Flagstaff and then stones. So, severe clashes lasted for 40 minutes. As a result, injured people emerged from both parts... Action participants beat off three attacks of militiamen. But what could do ordinary people against armed militiamen with militia batons, shields and in armoured waistcoats and helmets? So, people began breaking up. And at that moment real execution began which continued later in militia buses and in charge offices in the evening, at night and in the next morning... There were hundreds of people who

suffered. Among them there were a lot of minors and accidental passers-by... As a result of clashes more than 50 militiamen and soldiers of internal troops were injured and more than 100 participants of the Freedom March were arrested.

On 17 October, there were held actions in support of Freedom March in the administrative centres of Belarus. Uladar Tsurpanaw, chairman of the board of the Human Rights Centre in Magilew, was detained after authorised by the local authorities meeting. He was arrested for carrying a placard saying "No! To political repressions!" There was a resolution adopted during a meeting held in Vitsebsk. It requires immediate declaration of presidential elections in the country and putting a stop to activities aimed to unify Belarus and Russia.

On 18,19 and 20 October, people detained during and after Freedom March stood trials in different district courts. 65 people were charged. 20 of them were arrested and put in custody centre.

Court sittings that took place on October 18:

Minsk Savetski district court (judges Sheika, Lazovik, Milgui, Kazadaew)

1. Uladzimir Alyaksakhin – warning.

2. Anatol Sidarevich – court hearings were postponed till November 2, 1999.

3. Ludzmila Graznova –300 million roubles fine ($ 500).

4. Alyaksei Bildzyuk – warning.

5. Paval Savitski – 30 million roubles fine ($ 50).

6. Syargei Charnyawski – 30 million roubles fine.

7. Paval Kaparykha – 30 million rouble fine.

8. Alyaksei Shalistovich – warning.

9. Alyaksei Glushko – 29 million rouble fine.

10. Kiryla Guzkow – 5 million rouble fine.

11. Zmitser Yurkevich – trial postponed till October 22, 1999.

12. Yawgen Lugin – 10 days in detention.

13. Alyksei Nazaraw – 5 days in detention.

14. Natallya Makovik – trial postponed till October 21, 1999.

15. Aleg Kaspyarovich – 29 million rouble fine.

16. Paval Kirylionak – 10 days in detention.

17. Vychaslaw Zhuak – 5 days in detention.

18. Yuras Mukhlya – 29 million rouble fine.

19. Alexander Yafremenka – 3 days in detention.

20. Syargei Kanapelka – 29 million rouble fine.

21. Barys Gyunter – 15 days in detention.

22. Zoya Ivanova – 5 days in detention.

23. Turkow – 5 days in detention.

24. Bagdan Yarashewski – 7 days in detention.

25. Zmitser Grynkevich – 29 million rouble fine.

26. Andrei Kaparykha – 29 million rouble fine.

27. Dzyanis Sankovich – warning.

28. Maksim Vinyawski – warning.

29. Paval Kastsyuk – trial postponed till October 18, 1999.

30. Mikalai Ganchar – 29 million roubles fine.

31. Nadzeya Gerasimovich – warning.

32. Paval Sidarenka – warning.

33. Igar Sachanka – 40 million roubles fine.

34. Stanislaw Kavaliow – 35 million roubles fine.

Partyzanski district court (judges Trubnikaw, Dzyalinskaya)

1. Volga Bar’yalai – warning.

2. Uladzimir Kashchanka – warning.

3. Alexander Nikitsin – warning.

4. Georgy Kramko – trial postponed till October 10, 1999.

5. Miraslaw Lazowski – 5 days in detention.

6. Ales Antsipenka – warning.

7. Alexander Shkurko – 5 days in detention.

8. Yury Radzimowski – warning.

9. Alexander Kamarowski – 29 million roubles fine.

10. Paval Pyrkin – warning.

11. Vyachaslaw Gapeenka – trial postponed till October 21, 1999.

12. Syargei Babaryka – 5 days in detention.

13. Uladzimir Charnow – 3 days in detention.

14. Alexander Nikitsin – warning.

15. Mikalai Myatlitsky – warning.

16. Syargei Muzychyn – warning.

17. Uladzimir Slyshkin – 15 days in detention.

18. Syargei Yakimovich – 50 million roubles fine.

19. Syargei Martysh – 29 million roubles fine.

20. Alexander Kruchynin – warning.

21. Paval Goramash – 5 days in detention.

22. Maryna Abargimovich – 29 million roubles fine.

23. Valyantsina Lawretskaya – 29 million roubles fine.

24. Aleg Cherkas – 7 days in detention.

25. V.Prazhnikaw – 5 days in detention.

26. Osaw – warning.

27. Uladzimir Zvernik – warning.

Court sittings that took place October 20.

Minsk Savetski district court (judges Sheika and Kazadaew)

1. Anatol Lyabedzka – 10 days in detention.

2. Yawgen Afnagel – 15 days in detention.

3. Paval Kastsyuk – 40 million roubles fine.

Court sitting that took place on October 21.

Minsk Savetski district court

1. Natallya Makovik – 35 million rouble fine.

Court sitting that took place on October 22.

1. Zmitser Yurkevich – discharged.

Amnesty International stated that all people arrested during and after Freedom March in Minsk would be recognised prisoners of conscience what would allow them to seek refuge in the West.

On 24 October, a picket against Belarus' annexation by Russia, against deteriorating living conditions and poverty, and against independent newspapers' closure was held in Biaroza (Brest region) by local supporters of the democratic parties. Signatories were collected demanding independent inquiry on Yu.Zakharanka, V.Ganchar, A.Krasowski and T.Vinnikava' disappearances to be conducted.

On 31 October, a remembrance meeting in memory of repression victims during Stalin rule was held in Kurapaty outside Minsk. About 1000 of Minsk residents took part in it including delegates of the second session of the BPF congress, which was held that day in Minsk. Minsk City Executive Committee again banned conduction of rally in the centre of Minsk. While meeting participants were gathering on Yakub Kolas Square the militia get down to arrests. Militiamen dragged people with flowers into cars drove them away from Yakub Kolas Square and threaten promising to put them behind bars if they would go to the cemetery. One of the detained, member of the Belarusan Popular Front, Ales Shypko told, "I was put in a militia van for transportation of prisoners. There were five more people in a car together with me. Although there were some sectors in a car they put us all into one. My "colleagues" were plump people and there were not enough places for all of us in a car. One woman felt unwell. She cried that she had a diabetes and must to take insulin or otherwise she would die. But militiamen didn't hear anything and only when this women felt very bad and almost lost consciousness they threw her on the street. They kept us in a car for forty minutes. Then they drove us for half an hour around

the city and then they took us to Savetski Administration of Internal Affairs where they kept us one hour more motivating our detention by necessity to clear up our personalities. Then they wrote explanatory note, offered me to sign it and then released."

On 12 November, Bangalor Square in Minsk saw a picket from series "Belarusan Inquisition". It was devoted to the events of October 17, 1999 in Minsk when lots of people were severely beaten up and injured during and after Freedom March.

On 24 November, an action called "Hour of sorrow and freedom" was held in Minsk. It was dedicated to the anniversary of the 1996 constitutional overturn in Belarus. Six people were detained after the action, which lasted one hour from 18.00 to 19.00. Among them were Tsimafei Dranchuk (18 year old), Igar Varantsow (27, inhabitant of Zhodzina city), Alyaksei Mauchanski (29, entrepreneur). They were detained near the Victory Square by unknown people in civil and then brought to the Central Administration of Internal Affairs. They confiscated financial documents connected with business activities run by U.A.Mauchanski. That same evening three minors were detained on Yakub Kolas Square.

On 24 November, an opposition-organised action of protest against plans to sign the unification treaty between Belarus and Russian Federation was held in Grodna. About one thousand and five hundred people took part in this action. It was conducted in the form of rally. People walked along the central streets of the city with kindled lighters, candles and flashlights. People cried out catchwords for Belarus independence, against policy run by A.Lukashenka. At the end of the action participants burned up some copies of the draft treaty going to be signed on November 26. Around 17.30 some participants of the action were detained. Among them were professor Ales Astrowski, member of the BPF "Adradzhennie" Council, Uladzimir Runge, member of the BPF, and Ales Zakharaw, member of the Conservative Christian Party BPF. They drew up a charge sheet on A.Astrowski. The latter is charged with organisation of this action.

On 24 November, an action of protest against unification treaty between Belarus and Russian Federation was held in Brest. The central street of the city saw 80 people with candles in the hands. Everything turned out without detentions.

On 25 November, people detained after action "Hour of sorrow and freedom" stood trial in Minsk Central district court. I.Varantsow and A.Mawchanski were warned.

On 28 November, about 100 people were detained in the village Vyzna (Saligorsk district, Minsk region). They were participants of the trip to the places where the Slutsk

armed rebellion took place in 1920. Every year members and supporters of the democratic parties mark the anniversary of the anti-Bolshevik armed rebellion in Slutsk. According to this year's schedule it was planned to stage a commemoration meeting in Slutsk and to lay a wreath on the building of the Nobility assembly, where a statement was announced that people the armed rebellion was made up of are the army unit of the Belarusan People's Republic. The meeting and laying the wreaths was conducted under strict supervision of the local militia and special militia troops from Minsk. After it the participants made for the village Vyzna lots of inhabitants of which were lost during the rebellion. It was planned to lay the wreaths and flowers on the place where the cross in the memory of the perished people used to stay. At the frontier between Slutsk district and Saligorsk one travellers were met by two militia cars, which were convoying people going to the village Vyzna. In Vyzna the buses with participants of the trip were stopped and people were offered by militiamen to go to the church by foot. And so it was done. Literally in some minutes Anatol Nizki, head of the Slutsk city militia, came up to the trip participants and blamed them of organising an unauthorised rally and meeting. After that he offered all participants to take their sits in the buses and follow the militia car. Thus, one hundred people were taken to Saligorsk to the charge office. As a result two charge sheets were drawn up. According to them Valyantsin Baranaw and Mikola Antsypovich (they booked the buses) were accused of organising an unauthorised rally and meeting. The representative of "Viasna" Barys Gyunter vainly tried to explain to Anatol Nizki that it was simply an ordinary trip and the latter has nothing in common with either rally or meeting. So, it was clear that the only thing important for the local authorities was to stop the "suspicious" trip and they perfectly succeeded.

On 8 December, Frantsysk Skaryna Avenue was barricaded at 11 a.m. It was an action of protest against unification treaty between Belarus and Russian Federation and formation of a Union State. That very day Frantsysk Skaryna Avenue was barricaded again at 17.00. In some minutes the militiamen pushed away unsatisfied people from the thoroughfare. Some young people burned a Russian flag to protest it. After that demonstrators made for Kastrychnitskaya Square with national white-red-white flags and anti-integration catchwords. Near the National Circus marchers made one more attempt to barricade the Avenue. After that people in civil began detentions. Among the detained were Ramanaw Mikalai, Siuchyk Vyachaslaw, Adamovich Slavamir, Alyaksandraw Uladzimir, Petruchuk Ignat, Gurava Iryna, Kul'chanka Stsyapan. Four more persons were detained and afterwards released. They were Shchukin Valery, Vaskovich Zmitser, Vasilevich Natallya, and Kaspyarovich Zmitser.

On 8 December, Syargei Malchyk, senior lecturer of the pathological physiology faculty of the Grodna State Medical Institute, dismissed from this establishment to show the protest against signing the unification treaty between Belarus and Russian Federation. He distributed the following statement: "Having signed a unification treaty between Belarus and Russian Federation on December 8 illegal president of the Republic of Belarus Alexander Lukashenka committed heavy state crime – he ruined the independence of the Republic of Belarus. We all are to blame for what has happened. But the administration of deferent enterprises and institutions including our Institute is to bear responsibility for it… Thoughtlessly carrying out the orders from above you put the policy of a puppet regime into practice…"

On 9 December, trials over the detained people on December 8 began in the Minsk Savetski district court. Right before the trials the militiaman tried to drive out public defenders and observers representing the Human Rights Centre "Viasna" from the courtroom. Barys Gyunter demanded the judges Ina Sheyka and Ruslan Kazadaew to stop illegal actions of militiaman and asked the latter to produce papers and introduce himself. As a result representatives of "Viasna" were allowed to be present during trials. When the judge Ina Sheyka began the court process in the Russian language V.Siuchyk demanded she to speak the Belarusan language. The judge stated: "I don't want to speak this language and I'm not going to do it." A militia lieutenant colonel added: "This countryside language shouldn't be spoken there where all people speak the Russian." Barys Gyunter reminded the judges that according to the law one who insults the state language might be penalised and brought to the administrative responsibility. This stipulates a fine from 5 to 10 minimum wages.

On 10 December, a group of Belarusan citizens decided to hand over their petitions letters and demands to Alexander Lukashenka. It was planned to do at 16.00. Some lines of militiamen blocked all the entries to the presidential administration. They didn't allow people to come up to the building. A.Byalatski, chairman of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna" and a staff member Uladzimir Padgol broke through militia cordons and put the letter from "Viasna" in the post box designed for such purposes. S.Bagdankevich and M.Statkevich managed to do the same but a little bit later.

On 10, 13 and 14 December, people detained on December 8 for protesting the signing of unification treaty stood trials. The following court verdicts were brought in the Minsk Savetski district court:

1. Ramanaw Mikalai – fine 29 million roubles;

2. Siuchyk Vyachaslaw – fine 217 million roubles ($300);

3. Adamovich Slavamir. The trial was postponed due to mistakes in his charge sheet. S.adamovich was incriminated art.167.1 (part 2) – repeated participation in the unauthorised meetings, rallies and pickets though it was his first detention in this year.

4. Alyaksandaraw Uladzimir – warning;

5. Petruchuk Ignat – warning;

6. Gurava Iryna – warning;

7. Kul'chanka Stsypan – fine 217 million roubles.

Militiamen who were called witnesses gave false evidences. They said that people went on the road and by this interfered with traffic (but in reality the column of people went on sidewalk). But in spite of that the judge pleaded the detained people guilty.

On 16 December, workers of the Minsk Automobile Plant gathered near the checkpoint of this plant at 11.00 a.m. and organised unauthorised meeting of protest. The point is an administration of the plant sent away trade union organisation from the territory of the plant on December 8. The prosecutor of the Minsk Zavadzki district supported the Plant's administration. Workers that very day gathered again at 16.00. The militiamen detained seven workers. Among them were M.Marynich, D.Plisa, N.Zimin, U.Troshchy, V.Kaz'yanaw, M.Ramanaw, S.Pawlovich. They twisted M.Marynich's arm. Trials over detained workers began on December 20 in the Minsk Zavadzki district court. The workers were charged with organisation of unauthorised meeting and a picket. D.Plisa was fined 29 million roubles under art. 167.1 (part 2). Before the trial judge declined D.Plisa's petition about V.Babayed's access to the trial (trade union representative), in capacity of public defender. Though V.Babayed referred to the resolution №1 of the Supreme Court adopted on 25 March 1999 and to article 62 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, which provide the right for a defendant to legal defence in the trial and to service of public defenders.

On 18 December, G.Samoilenka, member of the National committee of the United Civic Party and simultaneously member of the BPF "Adradzhennie" organisation, was released at 19.00 from the isolator of the Brest Leninski district Administration of Internal Affairs. He was accused for breaking art. 167.1 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus. On 24 November he together with many other citizens protested the signing of the unification treaty between Belarus and Russian Federation by staying in a chain

with lighted candles. For this he was detained and then accused. Ten days of detention he was on hunger strike protesting repressive court verdict.

CRIMINAL PERSECUTIONS OF OPPOSITION POLITICIANS AND PARTICIPANTS OF OPPOSITION-ORGANISED ACTIONS

In 1999 number of instituted against opposition politicians proceedings grown up. In February 1999 Alyaksei Shydlowski was released after serving one year and a half behind bars. A.Shydlowski was arrested and sentenced for anti-Lukashenka's grafitty. Nevethereless deputies of the 13th Supreme Soviet Andrei Klimaw and Uladzimir Kudzinaw were still kept behind bars in 1999. Uladzimir Pleshchanka, former Minister of Agriculture Vasil Lyavonaw, ex-director of the joint stock venture "Rassvet" Vasil Staravoitaw, ex-head of the National Bank Tamara Vinnikava was kept under home arrest and many other people are the victims of the regime. All in all about 20 criminal proceedings were instituted against opposition politicians and opposition-oriented people. 7 criminal proceedings out of 20 were instituted after Freedom March held on 17 October.

In January, famous Belarusan lawyer Gary Paganyayla directed to the EU countries, European Institutions and embassies of the Belarus' neighbouring countries an appeal, in which he called to influence on the Belarusan authorities concerning the imprisoned ex-chairman of joint-stock venture "Rassvet" Vasil Staravoytaw. The authorities don't pay attention to the opinion of efficient experts, who affirm that numerous diseases of a 75-years old prisoner have to be treated immediately.

On December 20, editor of the Vitsebsk opposition newspaper "Vybar" Barys Khamayda appealed to Jewish organisations of the USA, France and Great Britain. In this appeal B.Khamayda asks collaboration concerning the release of Uladzimir Pleshchanka, chairman of branch of the BPF, from the custody. He has been in prison for 5 months already and is suspected of dismantling of the monument to the Russian commander Suvorov. B.Khamayada speaks in his appeals about his mother, who was saved in the spring of 1942 when fascists had destroyed the Jewish ghetto in Kalyshki, Liozna district. Khamayda's mother was saved from being shot by a local citizen. "Nowadays a Belarusan needs help, like at that time my relatives needed it. I ask you – help us for save the life of my Belarusan friends, Uladzimir Pleshchanka," – says the appeal.

On January 26, the board of the Kirawski district court headed by Nadzeya Chmara decided to expel from the sitting-hall the public representatives. The Judge said that all was a temporal measure and the doors of the court would be close while the medical expertise of the mental state of Vasil Staravoytaw had been carried on. The conduction of such an expertise in the courtroom – is an unprecedented case.

On January 26, Barys Khamayda, activist of the Vitsebsk branch of the BPF editor of the opposition newspaper "Vybar" has been detained. He came out in the streets with a slogan: "Let Pleshchanka off". B.Khamayada was instituted administrative proceedings under art. 167.1 (part 2) and got 15 days in detention.

On February 1, at the closed sitting of the Minsk Kirawsky district court there was read a conclusion of medical commission, which during a week time examined the state of health of ex-chairman of the closed joint-stock venture "Rassvet" – Vasil Staravoytaw. There was a difference of expert opinions. According to the conclusion made by psychiatrist Valery Budanaw V. Staravoytaw could not have been jailed in connection with his mental state. But the Budanaw's conclusion did not get on in the conclusion made by the commission of experts.

On February 23, Alyaksei Shydlowski, an activist of the Young Front, was released. On February 25 he held a press conference in the headquarters of the Belarusan Popular Front. He was arrested in August 1997 for anti-presidential graffiti in the town of Stawbtsy. On February 24, 1998 he was sentenced to one year and six months term of imprisonment. Alyaksei Shydlowsky spent six months in the investigation isolator in pre-trial detention. So he was to be released on 25 February 1999. A lot of friends of him from the Young Front planned to meet Alyaksei Shydlowsky near the prison where he was kept but in vain. Unexpectedly Alyaksei got an amnesty. It happened two days ahead of schedule. So he was released two days earlier. But why? It should be mentioned that according to the Belarusan act of indemnity a person who was given a legislative pardon during ten years could not count upon repeated amnesty. In the morning on February 25 the members of the Young Front together with A.Shydlowski held a picket against forced amnesty near the prison where Alyaksey Shydlowski spent his term.

On February 25, a criminal proceeding against Yawgen Skochka, activist of the Young Front, was instituted. On that very day he was released from special isolation ward, where he spent 10 days in administrative detention for taking part in the meeting-procession "Belarus to Europe". Being in the prison he was five days on hunger strike. On February 20 he stopped his hunger strike. Liubow Luniova, a representative of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96" who provided him with required foodstuffs to get off hunger strike, influenced his decision. It should be mentioned that shortly before detention he was in hospital – Ya.Skochka has a stomach ulcer. According to Yawgen Skochka he was placed on 23 February to so called "tram" -- penal isolator, which is like long dark room with concrete walls and floor and with a small window, which was plunked out. Besides the floor in this "room" was under the water. According to Yawgen this punishment was

caused by the celebration of Red Army Day. All the security guards were blind drunk. On February 25, immediately after his release Yawgen Skochka was brought to the city prosecutor's office where he was interrogated. He was accused of breaking the art.186 (p.3) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (organisation and participation in mass actions, which threw obstacles in public transports' way and so on).

On March 11, according to the article 190 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (unauthorised appropriation of official title or power, connected with committing socially dangerous deeds on this base) criminal proceedings were instituted against Viktar Ganchar. According to the Belarusan Criminal Code for this "crime" V.Ganchar could be sentenced to 2 years of imprisonment or corrective works.

On March 16, a trial over Uladzimir Pleshchanka – prominent opposition activist, chairman of the Vitsebsk council of the BPF "Vybar" was launched in the Vitsebsk Kastrychnitski district court. He was accused of being involved in the case of disappearance of the bust to the Russian commander Suvorov. He was charged with breaking the articles 201 (p.1) and 225 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (intentional hooliganism and destruction of historical and cultural monuments). The public of the city showed interest in the case. There were no free sits in the courtroom. Nadzeya Dudarava, an observer of the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus and representatives of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96" Ales Byalatsky and Valyantsin Stefanovich in capacity of public defenders were present at the trial. It should be mentioned that 50-year old U.Pleshchanka has been in custody for seven months in pre-trial detention. The state of his health has considerably worsened for this period. During his speech U.Pleshchanka stated that he was not being accused of hooliganism but of his political viewpoints and public activities. It became clear during the court sitting that there was no accusatory resolution in the court. To be exact U.Pleshchanka had only the first page of this document in triplicate. So the judge was forced to stop the court sitting and postponed the trial till March 26. The barrister and public defenders insisted on immediate release of U.Pleshchanka on written pledge not to leave the city, but in vain.

On March 29, prominent opposition activist, chairman of the Vitsebsk council of the Belarusan Popular Front "Vybar" Uladzimir Pleshchanka stood trial in Vitsebsk Kastrychnitsky district court. As it turned out during court examination Uladzimir Pleshchanka was not guilty. Judge A.Abashow had no choice but to direct the case to finish up it and to satisfy the barrister's and public defenders' demand to release U.Pleshchanka on condition of giving writing undertaking not to leave the city. So Uladzimir Pleshchanka was released straight in the courtroom. Considerable role in this

process plaid professional barrister Uladzimir Shaikevich and great public concern to the process.

On March 30, 15 unknown persons in civil tried to burst into Mikhail Chygir's pre-election headquarters. They said that they had come there to give Chygir a subpoena. According to witnesses these people drove to pre-election headquarters and watched it for some time. When Mikhail Chygir come to the office they rang the doorbell and ordered to open the door. They refused to show any documents and used bluster. They tore off the telephone wires. But nevertheless activists of the election campaign managed to contact journalists by mobile phone. When the journalists arrived the "unknown men in civil" disappeared. In some time Mikhail Chygir and his assistants left the headquarters. At 13.00 Chygir's car was stopped and Chygir and his assistant colonel Uladzimir Baradach were detained in the Minsk district Uruchcha. Then they were brought to the Investigative Administration of the Republic of Belarus. At 17.00 M.Chygir made a deposition on the case, which was instituted against him and connected with credits given by "Agraprambank" at the beginning of 1990s. At about 19.00 p.m. Uladzimir Baradach was discharged from the Investigative Administration. As for Mikhail Chygir, he was brought to the isolator ward of the Chief Administration of Internal Affairs (GUVD). He was detained for 3 days according to the article 119 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (arrest of a person suspected in committing a crime) for bearing witness on the case, which had been brought according to the article 91 (large-scale embezzlement).

On 8 April, the court hearings were conducted in the Minsk Central district court. Pavel Karshunovich, deputy chairman of the court, examined M.Chygir's appeal regarding measures of his detention and ruled out that they would remain the same - a detention. M.Chygir's wife - Yuliya Chygir (a lawyer by education) pleaded for him in court. A complaint was lodged on the ground that detention is usually practised in cases of dangerous criminals that jeopardise the people's lives. The court rejected M.Chygir's appeal to change the measures of his detention and the prosecutor's office sanctioned his arrest for another 3 months. Thus, the candidate for presidential office is going to be kept in custody while the scheduled on 16 May 1999 presidential elections will be held.

In April, criminal case was instituted on a charge of giving false evidence by Vera Stramkowskaya. The criminal case was instituted in compliance with article 128 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus, which stipulates amenability up to three years of imprisonment or two years of corrective labours or a fine. According to the Prosecutor of the Kirawski district (Magilew region) the criminal case was instituted on the basis of a

statement done by Anatol Smalentsaw, head of the group which investigated the case of Vasil Staravoitaw - former chairman of an agricultural joint-stock venture “Rassvet”. A.Smalentsaw considers that during the trial the barrister Vera Stramkowskaya gave an evidence known to be false which do discredit barrister’s honour and dignity. The core of the problem is the following: V.Stramkowskaya rose the question about care of material evidences, which were confiscated while searching a house of V.Staravoitaw. The question is about forty bottles of a brandy “Belyi Aist” (White stork). V.Stramkowskaya says that the question she asked is within the current legislature and there is nothing, which could contradict it.

In April, Valery Furs, deputy Prosecutor of Gomel city, instituted criminal proceedings in compliance with the article 188 (p.2) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus accusing former Minister of Internal Affairs Yuri Zakharanka of “impact on militia official aimed at putting obstacles for him to carry out his duties”. Yuri Zakharanka co-ordinates the activities of Mikhail Chyhir in Gomel region. The article he is accused of stipulates amenability ranging from corrective works up to one year of imprisonment or a fine. A countrywide inquiry was declared. Yuri Zakharanka himself knew nothing about this inquiry because he was not summoned to the Prosecutor’s office.

On 1 May, Dzimitryi Zadoraw, Pavel Lyashchynski and Syargei Shmyaliow were detained in Minsk. They were suspected of pulling down the state flag of the Republic of Belarus in Masheraw Avenue. Criminal proceedings were instituted against them under article 186.2 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus. This article stipulates corrective works up to two years or penalty.

On 20 May, examination of Yawgen Scochka case – deputy chairman of Malady Front (Young Front) began in the Minsk City court. He was charged with participation in a youth action “Belarus to Europe!” which took place on February 14.

On 28 May, trial over Vasil Staravoitaw, former chairman of the agricultural joint stock venture “Rassvet” and the twice Hero of Socialist’s labour, has come to an end. V.Staravoitaw has been kept in an isolation ward since November 1997 and accused of a number of economic crimes. The trial has been going on Since November 1998. The court’s verdict is as follows: two years of a strict colony regime with property confiscation. Alyaksei Yawstrataw, head of the transport shop, and Aleg Shapavalaw, head of the fish farm of “Rassvet” who were charged together with Vasil Staravoitaw were sentenced to five years of imprisonment. When the court’s verdict come in force V.Staravoitaw will have to serve five more months in jail.

On 14 June, Minsk City court brought a verdict to Ya.Skochka, which was one year of suspended sentence.

On 18 June, a trial over Ya.Murashka chairman of the Gomel branch of the Belarusan Helsinki Committee was launched in the Gomel Central district court. He was charged with breaking the established procedure of conducting assemblies, meetings, rallies and demonstrations (art. 196.1 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus). The reason was as follows: on 11 February Ya. Murashka organised a meeting with Viktar Ganchar, chairman of the Central Election Commission, in the building of educational centre. The judge Kostrykaw didn't take into account the testimonies of the witnesses and the arguments of barrister and public defenders from "Viasna-96" (Ales Byalatski and V.Stefanovich) and from Belarusan Helsinki Committee (A.Phiodaraw). They asked the judge to stop the criminal case for lack of corpus delicti but failed. Ya.Murashka was found guilty and was sentenced to one year of suspended sentence.

On 8 July, Syargei Laveikin, Aleg Koidaw and Anatol Bliznyatsow stood military trial in Vitsebsk. In springtime they took off Lukashenka's red-green flag from the building of Polatsk District Executive Committee. One of the guys serves in the Army that's why they stood military trial. They did not deny their actions. Guys stated that they were brought up and got social and political conscience under Belarusan national white-red-white flag, which used to be state symbol from 1991 till 1994 and they could not get red-green one… The court found them guilty and brought them verdicts which were as follows: S.Laveikin and A.Koidaw were fined 200 million roubles each (approximately 800 US dollars), A.Bliznyatsow who did break off the flag was fined 20 million roubles.

On 13 July, rector of the Gomel State Medical Institute professor Yury Bandazhewski was detained. He was incriminated article 169 (p.3) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (taking a bribe). Press communications reported that Y.Bandazhewski was detained for his active public position. He repeatedly stated that the government didn't take sufficient measures for appropriate medical treatment of people living in the deteriorated by the radiation districts of Belarus.

On 21 July, legal proceedings on Andrei Klimaw's case – deputy of the 13th Supreme Soviet – were launched. On 28 June the case of Andrei Klimaw was transferred to the Minsk Leninski district court. A.Klimaw had been under arrest since 11 February 1998. He had been accused of committing the series of economic crimes. But he pleaded not guilty claimed that he had been prosecuted just for critics of A.Lukashenka. Being in custody A.Klimaw refused from participation in investigation process protesting against breaking his deputy's immunity.

On 21 July, opposition-organised actions connected with the end of Lukashenka's original presidential mandate took place in Belarus. Mass fete was conducted in Minsk to mark the end of Alexander Lukashenka's five-year presidency in Kastrychnitskaya Square. Arrests and detentions of festive participants began after the end of the action. "People wearing civil clothes" were mainly engaged in the process of detentions. A lot of accidental passers-by that were merely passing through the square were detained. Among the detained people were A.Vouchak – chairman of the human rights organisation "Legal Assistance to the Population" and members of the Belarusan Social Democratic Party S.Kalinin and A.Simanenka. Against them criminal proceedings were instituted under art. 201 (p.2). As though they committed malicious hooliganism. Aleg Vouchak was severely beaten up during detention. This article stipulates imprisonment up to 5 years.

On 27 July, Yawgen Asinski was detained in Minsk after rally dedicated to the Independence Day of the Republic of Belarus, which was cancelled by A.Lukashenka. He was suspected of doing violent actions against militiamen. He was charged with breaking the article 201 (p.2) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (malicious hooliganism). According to information "Viasna-96" possesses Ya.Asinski was severely beaten while being in isolation ward. After accusation Ya.Asinski was transferred to the custody centre.

On 3 September, Yawgen Asinski was set free and was allowed to leave custody centre on pledge not to flee. He was kept 38 days in jail for participation in opposition action. An investigation changed the accusation articles. Instead of article 201 (p.2) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (malicious hooliganism) they incriminated two others: 186.3 (active participation in mass actions which break social order) and 189 (p.2) (threat to a militiaman on duty or use of force against him). According to these articles one can be imprisoned up to three year-term.

On 6 September, the militiamen in civil visited a flat of a member of the Belarusan Social Democratic Party "Narodnaya Gramada" Igar Simchanka (Brest resident). They said, "You are apprehended under the criminal case. You are to be convoyed to Minsk." I.Simchanka was taken to the Brest Mascowsky Department of Internal Affairs where he was kept till September 7 (one day). Later 2 militiamen in civil arrived from Minsk and took I.Simchanka in handcuffs by an ordinary train to the Kastrychnitsky Department of Internal Affairs in Minsk. Investigator Anatol Paznyak explained the reason for his detention and took an official undertaking not to flee from prosecution. He also interrogated the suspect. The problem is that on 1 May I.Simchanka in Labour Holiday held on Independence Square in Minsk. I.Simchanka was marching in the column, formed

by the BSDP "Narodnaya Gramada". When the demonstration was over, Igar Simchanka was detained as many other participants. On the following day, on 1 May, the Mascowsky court examined the case of all demonstrators. Judge Troinich failed to prove the administrative offence in the marchers' actions and terminated the case. Igar Simchanka was among the acquitted. But during the detention, while examining I.Simchanka's personal belongings a rubber militia truncheon was discovered. As I.Simchanka puts it, he works as a guard and forgot to take it out of the bag. On 1 May, I.Simchanka wrote an explanatory note and the case was stopped. But this case was resumed in the end of July. I.Simchanka got a subpoena to turn up for interrogation on 10 August in the Kastrychnitsky Department of Internal Affairs in Minsk. I.Simchanka's attempt what the matter was, failed. On 8 September I.Simchanka was charged under article 213 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (having, producing or selling daggers, knives or any other cold steel without permission). Maximum punishment stipulated under this article is 2 year of imprisonment. I.Simchanka was released on written pledge not to flee prosecution.

On 9 September, court hearings of Uladzimir Khilko's case (chairman of the Savings bank of the Republic of Belarus) were concluded. Judge Alena Syamak brought the following verdict: three years and a half of imprisonment in strict regime prison and $ 3.000.000 US compensation to the state. Uladzimir Khilko pleaded not guilty.

In September, the prosecutor's office of the Minsk Maskowsky district prolonged the inquiry of Aleg Vouchak's case up to three months. Criminal case was instituted against Aleg Vouchak after opposition held an action devoted to the expiry term of Lukashenka's presidential office.

On 23 September, court hearings of administrative case instituted against Aleg Vouchak, former investigator of the Prosecutor's office and actual chairman of non-governmental organisation "Legal Assistance to the Population", were held in the Minsk Mascowski district court. Aleg Vouchak was brought to book for taking part in a meeting on 27 July (unofficial Independence Day). The court terminated the case for a lack of corpus delicti in Aleg Vouchak's actions.

In September, collegium on criminal cases of Gomel regional court confirmed court's verdict brought to Yawgen Murashka - chairman of the region election commission he used to head when the presidential election campaign was held (16 May 1999). Criminal proceedings were instituted against him after a meeting of Gomel inhabitants with the chairman of the Central Election Commission Victar Ganchar. On 18 June 1999 the Gomel Central district court charged Ya.Murashka with repeated breaking an order of organising

and conducting mass actions and brought a verdict to him, which was one-year term of suspended sentence.

On 4 October, Zmitser Abadowski - a son of human rights activist Syargei Abadowski from Magilew - went on hunger strike. Younger Abadowski was charged with rape though there were no grounds for it. Moreover, a “victim” herself during identification pointed at a different man. Abadowski-father considers this accusation to be an attempt to punish him for active participation in political life and his human rights activities. Syargei Abadowski was not allowed to be a barrister of his son on the trial. Zmitser Abadowski left without legal assistance and barrister’s services refused to answer any questions and went on hunger strike... By the way, it was already the second attempt of Magilew law enforcement personnel to influence prominent human rights activist through his sons. Year ago another son of Syargey Abadowski - Ivan - was arrested. Ivan was an active member of Malady Front. Facing threat of punishment Ivan Abadowski was forced to ask for political asylum in Poland. And he escaped persecution and got political asylum.

On 17 October, the Minsk prosecutor’s office instituted criminal proceedings. An inquiry group was set up to investigate the details of clashes between Freedom March participants and militiamen. Six people were detained under the instituted criminal case who were charged under article 186.3 (organisation or active participation in mass actions that break social order) of the Criminal Code. Among them were Mikalai Statkevich, Valery Shchukin, Andrei Valabuew, Gleb Dogil, German Sushkevich, and Anton Lazaraw. This article stipulates imprisonment up to three years, corrective works or a penalty.

On 1 November, former Prime Minister Mikhail Chygir’s imprisonment in pre-trial detention was prolonged yet for one month. M.Chygir was arrested on 30 April 1999 during the campaign of presidential elections in Belarus, which was declared by the 13th Supreme Soviet. It should be mentioned that M.Chygir was one of the candidates for presidential office.

On 11 November, after two years of imprisonment front-rank farm manager of the most famous during Soviet times collective farm “Rassvet” (dawn) Vasil Staravoitaw was released from a corrective labour camp in Orsha. 75 year old Vasil Staravoitaw was arrested on November 11, 1997. It happened to him after Yawgen Mikalutski assassination, head of the State control committee for Magilew and Magilew region. Originally his arrest was connected with Mikalutski’s assassination. He was charged together with former Minister of Agriculture Vasil Lyavonaw (who was also arrested) for

financing and organising this terrorist act. But in late May 1999 he was convicted of large-scale embezzlement, repeated bribery, concealment of profits, contraband and some other crimes and sentenced to two-year term of imprisonment with property confiscation.

On 24 November, artist Ales Pushkin stood trial in the Minsk Leninski district court. He was accused under two articles of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus – art. 201.2 (part 2) (malicious hooliganism with exceptional cynicism) and art. 86 (part 2) (disrespect and humiliation of state symbols). Public defender Barys Gyunter, representative of the HRC "Viasna-96", insisted on position that everything done by the artist was nothing but art action. As a result of court sitting Ales Pushkin was brought the following verdict: two years of imprisonment with two years respite.

On 30 November, former Prime Minister Mikhail Chygir was released from pre-trial detention on his written pledge not to flee from prosecution. Mikhail Chygir was arrested on March 30 during preparations for opposition-organised presidential elections, in which he was a candidate for presidential office. It goes without saying that Mikhail Chygir was released thanks to the pressure of international community on Belarusan authorities and first of all to the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus. The trial over Mikhail Chygir according to official sources might take place in the near future.

In November, criminal case instituted against Aleg Vouchak, chairman of the non-governmental organisation "Legal Assistance to the Population", was terminated. The Maskowski district prosecutor's office carried it out. Aleg Vouchak was accused of malicious hooliganism (art. 201 (part 2) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus) on July 21 after the meeting dedicated to the end of Alexander Lukashenka's original mandate. On 21 July Aleg Vouchak was detained after the meeting by the militiamen and taken to the Minsk Maskowski Administration of Internal Affairs where he was beaten unmercifully. Aleg Vouchak was taken from the Administration of Internal Affairs to the hospital by the ambulance. The investigation lasted four months. And for that period they have done no investigation actions or experiments at all. As the criminal case was terminated they stopped a consideration of complaint lodged by Aleg Vouchak against illegal actions of militiamen who had beaten him up. Aleg Vouchak is going to appeal against it in the state prosecutor's office.

On 1 December, former Prime Minister Mikhail Chygir's criminal case was transferred to the Minsk City court. A lawyer Syargei Lepesh is going to defend Mikhail Chygir together with Yulia Chygir – Mikhail Chygir's wife. The first court sitting is going to be held on 27 December.

In December, former director of the Belarusan Metallurgical works 62-year-old Yuri Feaktystaw was presented final accusation – power abuse (art. 166 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus). Before it Yuri Feaktystaw passed through the outpatient treatment course in the Minsk Cardiology Institute where he got a disablement group.

POLITICAL PRISONERS

Mikhail Chygir

Mikhail Chygir had been chairman of the commercial joint stock bank “Belagroprombank” since 1991 till 1994. Since June 1994 till November 1996 – Prime Minister of the Republic of Belarus. Mikhail Chygir left the chair of the Prime Minister to show his disagreement with 1996 popular vote and economic course chosen by the president of the Republic of Belarus A.Lukashenka.

His intention to participate in the political campaign “Elections-99” Mikhail Chygir made public on 5 December 1998. As a result in February 1999 the authorities set up an auditing and check-up commission to examine the work of the bank.

120.000 signatories of Belarusan citizens were collected in March 1999 for nomination Mikhail Chygir for presidential elections. Simultaneously official mass media were spreading information discrediting Mikhail Chygir. He was accused of non-repayment of many millions credits. In the evening on March 28, 1999 National television reported that Mikhail Chygir had stolen one million dollars and left the country.

On 31 March 1999 Mikhail Chygir was registered as a candidate for presidential elections. One day before registration he was arrested. Mikhail Chygir was kept in pre-trial detention during eight months. On 30 November Mikhail Chygir was released on written pledge not to flee from prosecution. First court sitting scheduled on 27 December was postponed.

Mikhail Chygir is charged with breaking the articles 91(p.4) – “large scale embezzlement” and 166 – “power abuse.”

It is clear that “Mikhail Chygir’s case” has a political shade. And the punitive actions of the authorities are the evidence of that.

The Human Rights Centre “Viasna” believes that Mikhail Chygir was arrested and then kept in detention merely for his political viewpoints and participation in presidential elections.

Expert’s group on creation of political climate free from fear and political persecutions considers Mikhail Chygir prisoner of conscious.

Andrei Klimaw

Andrei Klimaw – deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the 13th convocation, member of the special parliamentarian commission on “Legal assessment of violations of the Constitution and the laws of the Republic of Belarus done by the president A.Lukashenka.” It was he who along with some other deputies of the 13th Supreme Soviet initiated A.Lukashenka’s impeachment in November 1996.

Andrei Klimaw was a head of the joint stock venture “Andrei Klimaw and C˚,” which dealt with the building. Following the 1996 referendum massed examinations of A.Klimaw business activities began. In order to find any compromising materials different agencies of KGB, Ministry of Internal Affairs and those from presidential administration and Security Council were engaged.

On 11 February Andrei Klimaw was arrested. He was accused under two articles of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus: 91(p.4) – “large scale embezzlement” and 151(p.2) – “breaking the order of running business activities”.

Being in custody centre Andrei Klimaw tried to protest violations of the Constitution adopted in 1994, which provides deputy’s immunity.

Under the law of the Republic of Belarus “About the Supreme Soviet” adopted on 21 December 1994: “Deputy of the Supreme Soviet cannot be brought to book, arrested or by other means deprived of freedom without resolution of the Supreme Soviet except for cases of red-handed detentions. Criminal case against a deputy of the Supreme Soviet can be instituted by the Prosecutor General with the Supreme Soviet permission or by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet within the period between sessions,” - article 106.

In this very case the 13th Supreme Soviet not only refused sanctioning of detention but also repeatedly insisted on deputy’s release.

Right before his detention A.Klimaw actively began his career as MP. He made up and spread a letter-appeal to the deferent kinds of directors about numerous violations of the Constitution done by the president A.Lukashenka and, which warned about responsibility for execution of Lukashenka’s orders. Because the latter performed coup d’etat in the November 1996 A.Klimaw once more reminded about illegitimacy of the popular vote conducted by A.Lukashenka in 1996. A.Klimaw was a member of the special Supreme Soviet commission on investigation of crimes committed by the president. This commission prepared a resolution, which said that there were enough legal grounds to launch the procedure of A.Lukashenka’s impeachment.

A.Klimaw stood trial in August 1999 (following a year and five month of investigation). He was found guilty under article 91 (p.4) – “large scale embezzlement,” article 151 (p.2) – “breaking the order of running business activity,” article 171 – “business forgery,” article 150.2 – “wheedling out a credit or subsidy.” The defendant asked one-month time to get familiar with materials of the criminal case he was being accused of (it consists of several volumes).

On 13 December, Andrey Klimaw, deputy of the 13th Supreme Soviet, was heavily beaten up by the officers of the investigation ward of the Board Administration of Internal Affairs. After that they brought Andrey Klimaw to the Leninski district court where the hearings of his case were held. An ambulance was called to the court building to give medical help to A.Klimaw. Prior medical examination proved that A.Klimaw had cranium injury and abdomen trauma. On 24 December the Prosecutor’s office of the Republic of Belarus declined the petition by Andrey Klimaw’s defence to institute criminal proceedings against people involved in A.Klimaw’s slaughter. The US State Department made an official statement concerning A.Klimaw’s slaughter.

The Human Rights Centre “Viasna” believes that Andrey Klimaw was arrested because of his political viewpoints and active participation in the work of the 13th Supreme Soviet including the work in commission on A.Lukashenka’s impeachment.

Expert’s group on problems of creation of political climate free from fear and political persecutions considers Andrey Klimaw prisoner of conscious.

Uladzimir Kudzinaw

Uladzimir Kudzinaw is a deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the 13th convocation. In the parliament he collaborated with the faction “Civic action”. He along with some other deputies of the 13th Supreme Soviet initiated A.Lukashenka’s impeachment in November 1996. During 1996 referendum he fixed and drew up numerous violations of the law in his electoral district and sent the reports about it both to the regional (Brest) and General Prosecutor’s offices of the Republic of Belarus.

Uladzimir Kudzinaw set up a firm “Ivatsevichy” in 1992. It dealt with breeding cattle, converting and selling meet products. This enterprise provided more than 300 people with working place. It should be mentioned that the wages of “Ivatsevichy” workers were the highest in the district. The conflict between entrepreneur and district authorities occurred in the end of 1995 when Uladzimir Kudzinaw decided to be a deputy of the Supreme Soviet. A tax inspection made up of 120 people was directed to the firm to examine it. The normal work of the firm was paralysed for quite a long period of time

because of it. Within the year 1996 the firm "Ivatsevichy" passed through all possible check ups: from tax examination to the KGB one. In the end of 1996 the building of the firm became the state property and all the shops belonging to U.Kudzinaw were closed. Thus 300 people lost their job. U.Kudzinaw tried to rescue his business by exporting meet products to Russia.

On 4 February 1997 U.Kudzinaw was arrested under fabricated accusation (repeated attempts to give a bribe to the person on duty).

On 4 August 1997 the Barysaw district court (Minsk region) found U.Kudzinaw guilty under article 15 (p.2) and article 170 (p.2) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus – "repeated attempts of giving bribe to a person on duty." The judge sentenced U.Kudzinaw to 7 years of imprisonment in the strict regime colony with property confiscation.

U.Kudzinaw pleaded not guilty. He asserted that militia properly worked out a plan of his detention and then carried it out. Besides it he pointed out that during prior investigation there took place serious violations of the law.

Under the law of the Republic of Belarus "About the Supreme Soviet" adopted on 21 December 1994: "Deputy of the Supreme Soviet cannot be brought to book, arrested or by other means deprived of freedom without resolution of the Supreme Soviet except for cases of red-handed detentions. Criminal case against a deputy of the Supreme Soviet can be instituted by the Prosecutor General with the Supreme Soviet permission or by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet within the period between sessions."

Though the Supreme Soviet didn't authorise either the institution of criminal proceedings against U.Kudzinaw nor the detention of him the Prosecutor General of the Republic of Belarus instituted criminal case under article 170 of the Criminal Code – corpus of it relates to heavy crimes.

The Barysaw district court was not empowered to consider the case of the deputy of the Supreme Soviet. The criminal case was to be considered only by the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus. The Supreme Court considered the U.Kudzinaw's case in May 1998 and left the verdict brought by the Barysaw district court without changes.

The Human Rights Centre "Viasna" believes that U.Kudzinaw was arrested because of his political viewpoints and active participation in the work of the 13th Supreme Soviet including his participation in the campaign on A.Lukashenka's impeachment.

Expert's group on problems of creation of political climate free from fear and political persecutions considers Uladzimir Kudzinaw prisoner of conscious.

Vadzim Kabanchuk

Vadzim Kabanchuk is an activist of the "Malady Front".

On 27 March 1998 the court hearings on Vadzim Kabanchuk case came to the end. He was found guilty under two articles of the Criminal Code: art. 186.3 – "organisation or participation in mass events breaking social order," and art. 187 (p.2) – "resistance to a militiaman on duty connected with violence or a threat to use violence."

These accusations were brought forward to V.Kabanchuk for participation in opposition-organised actions, which were held on 10 and 23 March 1997.

In October 1997 V.Kabanchuk was arrested and kept almost 6 months in custody centre in pre-trial detention.

The court found V.Kabanchuk guilty and brought a verdict: 3 years of suspended sentence with 2 years respite. He was set free in the courtroom.

The Human Rights Centre "Viasna" believes that court's verdict brought to V.Kabanchuk must be disaffirmed because of political nature of the case.

Vasil Lyavonaw

Vasil Lyavonaw is former Minister of Agriculture. Before his minister's career V.Lyavonaw headed the Magilew Oblast Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR and later was a Belarusan trade representative in Germany. Since that time V.Lyavonaw has been acquainted with Alexander Lukashenka who at that time had been a director of the sovkhoz "Garadzets" (Magilew region).

During first presidential elections in the history of Belarus V.Lyavonaw supported V.Kebich but regardless of that he accepted an offer made by A.Lukashenka to take a post of the Minister of Agriculture. V.Lyavonaw didn't support the idea of referendum to be held in November 1996. After that massed check ups began in the Ministry. Vasil Lyavonaw consistently stood for reforms in the agriculture. He was for transformation of the collective farms into joint stock ventures and private farms. He wanted market mechanisms reigned in the agriculture but not administrative ones. It was V.Lyavonaw's viewpoints that became the reason of his arrest.

Vasil Lyavonaw was arrested on 11 November 1997 in his study. The process of detention was filmed and then several times was shown on TV. The Human Rights Centre considers these actions to be a pressure on the investigation and the court. Public appearances of A.Lukashenka regarding V.Lyavonaw's case can also be considered as pressure on investigation and the court. For example A.Lukashenka during his appearance on the assembly of the agricultural joint stock venture "Rassvet", which was transmitted on TV said: "I have a pressing request for Mr Glukhowski to carry out the investigation in the most strict way!" On this very assembly A.Lukashenka accused V.Lyvonaw of having connections to Ya.Mikalutski's assassination. It should be mentioned that the last accusation was never brought forward to V.Lyavonaw.

Ex-Minister was found guilty under three articles of the Criminal Code: art. 91.1 – "large scale embezzlement," art. 169 – "taking a bribe," and art. 213 – "illegal keeping of weapons and live ammunition." Vasil Lyavonaw pleaded not guilty on the court, which had been held on 17 August 1999. During his first speech on trial V.Lyavonaw stated that his case is not criminal but political one; and said that he didn't believe in fair trial because of A.Lukashenka's desire to put him behind bars.

V.Lyavonaw is 61. He had several chronic diseases. And state of his health got even more complicated after detention in custody centre.

We believe that V.Lyavonaw's arrest is closely connected with his principal position and attempts to introduce changes to the country's agricultural system.

Uladzimir Pleshchanka

Uladzimir Pleshchanka is a chairman of the Vitsebsk council of the BPF "Vybar." He was detained in Vitsebsk on 2 September 1998 on suspicion of dismantling the monument to the Russian commander A.Suvurov. Criminal proceedings were instituted against him under two articles of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus: art. 225 – "dismantling or a damage of the historical and cultural monuments," and art. 87 – "property stealing." Soon after accusation article 87 was removed because it turned out that the monument was made of not precious materials. But instead of it he was accused under art. 201 (p.2) of the Criminal Code – "malicious hooliganism."

Uladzimir Pleshchanka almost eight months – while the investigation was conducted – was kept in Vitsebsk custody centre. On 29 March 1999 court hearings were held. On that day all the points of accusation were beaten up. The case was sent for re-investigation. And what is very important U.Pleshchanka was released on a written pledge not to flee from prosecution.

The case on the disappearance of the monument to A.Suvorov is still open. Uladzimir Pleshchanka is still considered to be the only accused. Though the time for investigation was lost and some investigation procedures were illegally carried out that had been proved by the court the pressure on U.Pleshchanka goes on.

The Human Rights Centre “Viasna” believes that the criminal proceedings against Uladzimir Pleshchanka should be terminated because of a lack of corpus delicti and the fact that accusation was not proved.

Yawgen Asinski

Yawgen Asinski was detained on 27 July 1999 after opposition-organised action. He was at once accused under article 201 (p.2) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus – “malicious hooliganism”. He was accused of that as if he had kicked the militiaman.

During the investigation process articles of accusation were changed. As for today Ya.Asinski is charged with breaking article 186.3 of the Criminal Code – “active participation in the mass actions breaking social order,” and article 189 (p.2) – “threat or violence in respect of militiaman on duty.” This article stipulates criminal responsibility up to three years of imprisonment.

Yawgen Asinski was kept in custody centre for 38 days and after it he was released on a written pledge not flee from prosecution.

The HRC “Viasna” believes that Yawgen Asinski’s case is purely political one. And that is why it must be terminated.

Yury Bandazhewski

Yury Bandazhewski is a rector of the Gomel State Medical Institute, doctor of medical sciences, professor.

On 13 July 1999 Yury Bandazhewski was detained and put in custody isolator. On 4 August he was found guilty under article 169 (p.3) – “taking a bribe.”

The accusation was built according to the testimonies given by the pro-rector Uladzimir Rawkow of the above-mentioned institute who was detained on 12 July. There is an opinion saying that psychological means were used against Uladzimir Rawkow. It’s proved by the fact that in the end of July Uladzimir Rawkow applied to the Gomel region prosecutor with a statement refusing his previous testimonies. Thus criminal proceedings were instituted against Yu.Bandazhewski and U.Rawkow under article 169 (p.3). It means

that they are suspected of a large scale bribe-taking for promoting some leavers and assisting them with entering the institute.

There are no direct proofs in the case of Yu.Bandazhewski. There is an opinion that detention of the professor Bandazhewski was a premeditated operation. Yury Bandazhewski recently sent a letter to A.Lukashenka in which he had described tense relations of a Medical Institute with the Republic of Belarus' Ministry of Health Care. Yu.Bandazhewski believes that it was caused by disclosed by him "facts of non-purposeful use of means by the Institute of Radiation Medicine of the Ministry of Health Care." Such a conclusion was made after work in a special commission that analysed the efficiency of research results carried out by Research Clinical Institute of Radiation Medicine and Endocrinology. The total sum of research works was estimated 17 milliard roubles. Professor's report says that only some works with a cost of 1.1 milliard roubles "can be useful from scientific and practical point of view," while the rest of the money (16-milliard roubles) was wasted up.

So, when Yu.Bandazhewski armed with sensational research results repeatedly called "upper crust" to take care of people suffered from Chernobyl catastrophe and when he touched the matter of money troubles began. And following some time he was arrested. It must be emphasised that Yu.Bandazhewski repeatedly stated that the government didn't take sufficient measures for appropriate medical treatment of people living in the deteriorated by the radiation districts of Belarus.

On 27 December Yury Bandazhewski was released on a written pledge not to flee from prosecution. This decision was made because of bad health state of Yu.Bandazhewski.

The HRC "Viasna" believes that prosecution of Yury Bandazhewski is connected with his objectionable and principal position in respect of the problems of radiation defence of the population suffered from Chernobyl catastrophe.

Mikalai Statkevich

Mikola Statkevich is a chairman of the Belarusan Social Democratic Party "Narodnaya Gramada." On July 27, 1999 he was detained after opposition-organised action dedicated to the Independence Day and charged with an organising of unauthorised demonstration. On 28 July he was sentenced to 10 days in administrative detention. While he was serving his term a prosecutor's office instituted criminal proceedings against Mikola Statkevich for … the same crime. This time he was accused of

breaking article 186.3 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus – "organisation or active participation in massed actions breaking social order."

M.Statkevich was also detained after Freedom March on 17 October in the headquarters of the Social Democratic Party. He was arrested. On 18 October M.Statkevich went on hunger strike to protest the illegal actions of the authorities and the militia. On 31 October M.Statkevich was set free on a written pledge not to flee from prosecution.

The HRC "Viasna" believes that institution of criminal proceedings against Mikola Statkevich is purely political prosecution; it is nothing but human rights violation. We demand termination of this case.

Valery Shchukin

Valery Shchukin is a deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the 13th convocation, human rights activist, and journalist – correspondent of the independent newspaper "Narodnaya Volya."

V.Shchukin was one of the initiators of the meeting-rally "Freedom March." But when the city authorities banned conduction of the rally V.Shchukin denied his signature and joined the rally in capacity of ordinary participant. V.Shchukin was summoned to the Minsk Savetski district Administration of Internal Affairs where he was detained under the article 119 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus. While detaining V.Shchukin militiamen severely beat him up (V.Shchukin lodged a complaint about it to the Prosecutor's office of the Minsk Savetski district).

V.Shchukin was put to the custody isolator where he was kept during three days. On 22 October V.Shchukin was found guilty under article 186.3 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus and after that he was directed to the investigation isolator in Valadarski St.

Then some days after he was released on a written pledge not flee from prosecution.

As far as V.Shchukin is concerned his deputy's immunity was broken. No resolutions by the legal Supreme Soviet were passed in this connection, as it must be under the law.

Anton Lazaraw

Anton Lazaraw is 18. He works as an assistant of a seller on the Chervenski market in Minsk. He was detained on 21 October on his working place for participation in the Freedom March. A militiaman came up to him and asked A.Lazaraw to follow him.

A.Lazaraw was first brought to the Central district Administration of Internal Affairs. His relatives were informed of his son detention. On 22 October A.Lazaraw was taken to the custody isolator and after accusation under article 186.3 A.Lazaraw was brought to the custody centre in Valadarski St. Later he was released on a written pledge not to flee.

Andrei Valabuew

Andrei is 17. He is the eldest son in the family, which has got four children. Andrei left the evening school and currently is trying to get a job on the amalgamation "Horizont."

A.Valabuew was detained along with his friends German Sushkevich and Gleb Dogil after Freedom March in the passage of metro station "Victory Square." Young people were talking when all of a sudden they were approached by five people in civil who caught them and dragged them to the cars.

Young friends were taken first to the Savetski district Administration of Internal Affairs and then they were brought to the custody isolator where young guys were kept for three days. A.Valabuew was accused under article 186.3 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus. He was set free on a written pledge not to flee.

Gleb Dogil

Gleb is 20. He is a 4-year student of the History department, the Belarus State University. As his mother puts he belongs to the "democratically oriented youth" and is a "book worm." He has bad eyesight. That is why Gleb Dogil's relatives are concerned about his health state.

G.Dogil was detained together with his friends German Suchkevich (a cousin of him) and Andrei Valabuew. Young friends were taken first to the Savetski district Administration of Internal Affairs and then they were brought to the custody isolator where young guys were kept for three days. G.Dogil was found guilty under article 186.3 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus on 27 October. He was set free on a written pledge not to flee.

German Sushkevich

German is 19. He is a 3-year student of the Belarus State University of Radio-electronics and Informatics (evening department). German is an activist of Malady Front.

G.Sushkevich was detained after Freedom March on 17 October at about 17.00 in the passage of the metro station “Victory Square” along with his cousin G.Dogil and a friend of him A.Valabuew. G.Sushkevich resisted to men in civil when they tried to detain them for they were in civil and didn’t introduce themselves. German was heavily kicked and then dragged to the car. German as well as his friend was taken first to the Savetski district Administration of Internal Affairs and then he was brought to the custody isolator in Valadarski St.

German Sushkevich was found guilty under article 186.3 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus on 27 October. He was set free on a written pledge not to flee.

DISAPPEARANCES OF OPPOSITION LEADERS

Strict opposition of regime and political parties resulted in series of mysterious deaths and disappearances of the opposition leaders. Though the shadow of guilty may lie on the authorities Belarusan official detectives and investigation bodies were surprisingly uninterested in these cases.

On 5 April, a tragedy happened in Magilew city at about 4 p.m. The body of Slavamir Ambruzhevich, member of the Social Democratic Party "Narodnaya Gramada", was found in a building sandpit. According to Valadar Tsurpanaw, human rights activist, the found body was with some skull's injuries. Moreover, agitation leaflets and money from his pocket were not stolen. The building sandpit where S.Ambruzhevich was found dead is situated a long way from his house - in the opposite direction. S.Ambruzhevich is said to be the observer in one of the election constituencies during the local council's elections on Sunday, 4 April 1999. The militia refused to institute proceedings concerning this case. According to them S.Ambruzhevich was a victim of an accident but not of acts of violence. However, the party members connect S.Ambruzhevich's death with his political activity.

On 6 April, Genadz Karpenka, deputy chairman of the 13th Supreme Soviet and the United Civic Party, Doctor of Technical Sciences, academician of the Belarusan Engineer and Technical Academy, corresponding member of the National Academy of Sciences, head of the National Executive Committee, all of a sudden died.

On 8 March, ex-head of the National Bank Tamara Vinnikava disappeared. In late 1996 criminal proceedings against Tamara Vinnikava were instituted under some articles of the Criminal Code of the RB: power abuse, large-scale embezzlement and etc. On 14 January 1997 she was arrested and almost 10 months was kept in the KGB custody centre in pre-trial detention. On 7 November she was placed under home arrest because of bad health state.

On 8 April, following the disappearance of ex-head of the National Bank T.Vinnikava, Lyudmila Uliyashina - T.Vinnikava's lawyer was detained and taken to the Republican Prosecutor's office by the militia officers.

On 24 April, Arnold Piacherski, chairman of an association of entrepreneurs of Minsk City and Minsk region “Community”, died in a traffic accident at about 17.00 on the road Minsk-Moscow near the town of Krupki (Minsk oblast). Arnold Piacherski was 34 year old and was well known for organisation of strike series on the stadium “Dynama” and on the

market “Zhdanovichy”. Arnold Piacherski was an agent of M.Chyhir in election campaign and actively took part in presidential elections scheduled on May 16.

On 8 May, Volga Barysawna Zakharanka, a wife of the former minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, applied to police with a statement about disappearance of her husband. V.Zakharanka informed that on May 7 in the evening she spoke with her husband last time. According to Volga Barysawna Yuri Zakharanka told her that he just parked a car and was going home. “In 10 minutes I am at home”, -- said Yuri Zakharanka. A way from parking place to the house in fact takes not more than 10-15 minutes. Yuri Zakharanka disappeared while going home. Volga Zakharanka does not exclude even the worst scenario. “They can do with him everything they want and then say that it was an accident”, believes Volga Zakharanka. The wife of former minister of Internal Affairs asserts that Yuri Zakharanka was many times threatened and warned in connection with his activities: he helped Mikhail Chyhir in his election campaign and was going to set up the “Officers’ Union”. “It was clearly seen that my husband was a headache of Belarusan authorities. We were watched and overhead and threatened all the time”,- says Volga Barysawna. Yuri Zakharanka was appointed the minister of Internal Affairs in 1994 but in a year and a half he was dismissed. The reason of his dismissal is considered Zakharanka’s strict position to follow the law and the Constitution but not the president’s will and his orders.

In July, Vitsebsk authorities announced a search of Yuras Maroz – activist of the Vitsebsk Council of the Belarusan Popular Front, who… a year ago asked political asylum in Czech Republic and got it.

On 16 September, Viktar Ganchar – chairman of the Central Election Committee of the RB, Vice-Speaker of the only legitimate Belarusan State Body – the Supreme Soviet of the 13th convocation all of a sudden disappeared in the late evening on his way to home from bathhouse. Together with Viktar Ganchar disappeared also well known in Belarus businessman Anatol Krasowski. On the spot of disappearance the traces of blood were found… The Minsk Prosecutor’s office instituted criminal proceedings under art. 101 of the Criminal code of the RB (deliberate murder). A public investigation group was also set up.

On 20 September, the USA expressed concern about Viktar Ganchar’s disappearance. James Foully, deputy press secretary of the USA State Department appeared with a statement. The USA State Department’s statement says, “Victar Ganchar’s disappearance is not the first among the opponents of Lukashenka’s regime. Tamara Vinnikava, ex-head of the National Bank, disappeared on 8 April. General Yury

Zakharanka, former Minister of Defence, disappeared under mysterious circumstances on 7 May. The whereabouts of Vinnikava and general Zakharanka as well as their fate still remains unknown. United States is deeply concerned by this tendency and how people disappear in Belarus. We call the Belarusan government to make every effort in quest of Ganchar, Vinnikava and Zakharanka's location and to ensure their safety."

On 22 September, Zinaida Ganchar and Iryna Krasowskaya, the wives of Victar Ganchar and Anatol Kraskowski disappeared on 16 September, as well as Katsyaryna Antonic, V.Ganchar's secretary, and Yawgen Lychow, V.Ganchar's driver, were called witnesses to the Minsk Prosecutor's office.

On 24 September, Bronislaw Geremek, head of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Poland, addressed with open letter Ural Latypaw, minister for Foreign Affairs in Belarus, and Belarus vice-prime minister. The letter was written because of Victar Ganchar's disappearance, acting chairman of the 13th Supreme Soviet. The letter said that Victar Ganchar's disappearance caused deep concern in Poland. Bronislaw Geremek in his letter also expressed readiness to give any information and help needed in order to clear up the fact of Victar Ganchar's disappearance.

On 30 September, the newspaper "Narodnaya Volya" published an open appeal-letter written by Victar Ganchar's mother which said, "I appeal to law enforcement personnel of the Republic of Belarus: I will pray for you the rest of my life. I beg you to help me in my grief! I apply to you, Mr. President, to recall my kindness, simplicity and my hospitality regarding you. I beg you to help me to return my son back!"

On 12 October, first deputy head of the Foreign Ministry and head of country's militia Mikhail Udovikaw met with representatives of the Belarusan and foreign mass media. M.Udovikaw in addition to what was said during this press conference stated, "In the near future you will learn interesting peculiarities connected with Viktar Ganchar and Krasowski's disappearance..." M.Udovikaw didn't keep his word.

In October, representatives of public investigation commission on Yury Zakharanka's disappearance (ex-Minister of Defence) Uladzimir Arystaw, co-ordinator of the League of Belarus' militia officers, and Aleg Vouchyk, former investigator of the prosecutor's office, met with Svyatlana Baikova, investigator of the city prosecutor's office who is pleading a criminal case instituted after Yu.Zakharanka's disappearance. As a result, they came to a conclusion about possible interaction.

On 13 December, ex-head of the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus Tamara Vinnikava gave an interview to the radio BBC. Tamara Vinnikava was arrested on 14

January 1997 and being guarded disappeared on 8 April 1999. Tamara Vinnikava was accused under several articles of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus: power abuse, large scale embezzlement, forgery and etc. She also made a phone to the "Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta." So first interview was given by phone. None journalist saw T.Vinnikava. But those who heard her voice by phone assert that it was really T.Vinnikava's voice…

VIOLATIONS OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH, OPINION AND EXPRESSION. PERSECUTIONS OF INDEPENDENT PRESS AND INDEPENDENT JOURNALISTS

The freedom of speech is provided by the Belarusan Constitution but, in fact, to realise this constitutional right is getting harder and harder every year. Official editions since first days of A.Lukashenka’s power have been subject for strict state control. Meanwhile the number of independent editions is declining every year. The newspapers “Naviny” (news) and “Imya” (name) were banned in 1999. The State Committee on Press by its special resolution refused to licence the work of nine editions including the newspaper “Nasha Svaboda” (our freedom), which should have come out in spite of banned “Naviny.” The Belarusan opposition has no access at all to the radio or TV. Talks between the authorities and the most influential political parties and movements were conducted during some months. The agreement about one and a half minutes access to the evening daily news programme on TV was reached but A.Lukashenka cancelled it.

In January, the leadership of the printing house in Rechytsa (Gomel region) refused to publish the independent newspaper “Gomelskaya Dumka” in spite of the official agreement. Rygor Stsepanenka, chairman of the district administration of press prohibited publishing the newspaper. He considered that “Gomelskaya Dumka” in its articles insults the presidential “vertical”.

In February, independent newspapers were warned by the State Committee on Press for publishing materials about coming presidential elections scheduled to be held on May 16, 1999 by the Supreme Soviet of the 13th convocation. The warnings say that publication of documents adopted by “Non-existent State body” is nothing like an infringement of the law on press (call for seizure of power).

On March 2, officials of the Grodna prosecutor’s office, police and those of the State Security Committee conducted a series of searches. An editorial office of the newspaper “Pagonya”, office of the public organisation “Ratusha” and Toy’s Theatre were searched. They looked for information materials even somehow connected with presidential elections scheduled to be held on 16 May. In the editorial office of the newspaper “Pagonya” they confiscated archive materials and editorial correspondence. In consequence of the search conducted in the office of the public organisation “Ratusha” some burlesque miscellanies by Ales Suvoraw, brochure by Syamion Sharetski titled “The Tragedy of Belarus” and hearings of commissions on presidential elections were seized.

On March 17, the fire began in the editorial office of a local independent newspaper "Khimik" (Chemist) in Navapolatsk (Vitsebsk region) at 22.30 p.m. Unknown persons set the door of the office on fire. It should be mentioned that the newspaper published opposition materials and number of articles, which criticised the activities of local authorities. The local authorities tried to destroy this independent issue by uniting the newspaper's editorial staff with that one of the newspaper "New paper". Members of the editorial staff of the newspaper "Khimik" told that they received a lot of threatening anonymous telephone calls. The facts that were mentioned above give the reason to think that the editorial office was set on fire not occasionally and was aimed at further intimidation of members of the editorial staff of the independent newspaper.

On March 19, editor in chief of the newspaper "Vybar" (Choice) Barys Khamaida, who was accused of breaking the article 156 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus (small hooliganism), was detained in Vitsebsk. The examination carried out in the 'sobering-up' station showed that the detained was not drunk. On March 22 the judge of Zhaleznadarozhny district Afanas'ew imposed a fine upon B.Khamaida (1 million roubles). For the same "crime" on March 18 Yuras' Karpaw, journalist of the newspaper "Vybar", was detained and drawn up a report. It should be mentioned that both of them come out as witnesses on trial over Uladzimir Pleshchanka.

On 7 April, Aleg Gruzdzilovich, news reporter from the independent newspaper "Naviny" (The News) was taken into the KGB headquarters for questioning. In the morning when Aleg Gruzdzilovich left home, 8 people in plainclothes approached him and after showing the KGB ID cards delivered him to the KGB. It worth mentioning that on 5 April Aleg Gruzdzilovich had already received summons to the KGB. On that very day A.Gruzdzilovich appeared at the KGB together with a prominent lawyer in Belarus - Gary Paganyaila and said that he would only speak with the investigator in the presence of his advocate. Investigation officer for special affairs Genadz Gnyadzko refused to have such a talk. On 7 April, straight after A.Gruzdzilovich was delivered to the KGB, he was informed about being incriminated and that he should give the evidence as a witness. Aleg Gruzdzilovich refused to answer the questions without a juridical consultant referring to art. 62 of the Constitution of the RB which guarantees a juridical assistance in such cases. Apart from that, A.Gruzdzilovich refused to sign under the record where all his words were put down as well as to sign for "not divulging the details of the previous investigation". Maybe the reason of taking A.Gruzdzilovich to the KGB was connected with the article " The secret plan against the opposition" published in the newspaper "Naviny" on 19 March. The plan of counteractions against "the group of radical opposition leaders initiating the anti-presidential elections" was cited in that article.

There were a lot of provisions in that document which plainly contradicted to the Constitution of the RB and violated the human rights. Thus, the KGB according to the plan should "take advantage of the situation in order to separate, break and blackmail the opposition".

On 21 May, P.Kanavalchyk, editor-in-chief of the independent newspaper “Navinki” – newsletter of the Minsk’s cultural beau monde set up by a group of anarchists in January 1998, was severely beaten by people in civilian clothes near the entrance to his house. The satiric newspaper responded to all happenings. According to Ales Mazur, responsible secretary of “Navinki” newspaper, it might be an ordinary hooligan but the possibility of intelligence services’ involvement can’t be also eliminated. Heavily injured P.Kanavalchyk was brought to hospital where he was performed an operation.

On 26 May, State Committee on Press issued next in turn warning to the independent newspaper “Naviny”, which is the second during the year. First one was issued for publication an information about presidential election scheduled on May 16. The second one – for the article “Carbuncles of Lawfulness” by Alexander Dubravin. According to State Committee on Press A.Dubravin stirs up social hostility and humiliates police officials.

In June, State Committee on Press warned the newspaper “Imya.” It was the second warning of this newspaper in the running year. First it was warned in February for the article by editor-in-chief Iryna Khalip about forthcoming presidential elections. This time the officials were not satisfied with an article titled “Festival like “Kinotavr.” The article says that Russian City Sochy saw A.Lukashenka during movie festival “Kinotavr.” The point is that A.Lukashenka was invited by anybody to come to the festival. And when he appeared the Russian intelligentsia was going to leave the hall… Under the law “About press and other mass media” in case an editorial body is warned twice within one year it work might be suspended.

On July 22, investigators of the prosecutor’s office appeared in the office of the newspaper “Imya” with search warrant. The objective of the search was “looking for and confiscation of fabricated and other materials.”

On 7 September, some militiamen arrested Syargei Chyryk – photo-correspondent of the newspaper “Belaruskaya Maladzhiozhnaya” after unauthorised action, which was held by the Party of Freedom. In spite of his ID card they brought S.Chyruk to the Minsk Central Administration of Internal Affairs where they confiscated S.Chyryk’s video camera. Some time after they gave it back… but without videocassette with exclusive video material.

On September 24, Maskowsky court examined unprecedented lawsuit, filed by State secretary of the Security Soviet Victar Sheiman against the independent newspaper "Naviny" and journalist Syargei Aniska. The lawsuit was filed soon after Alexander Lukashenka had paid attention to the article and at one of his sittings had ordered to "close the newspaper legally". V.Sheiman had considered that the newspaper "Naviny" in the article "Who lives in this cottage?" (the article describes the house of V.Sheiman's parents in the village of Padlipki, Puchavichy district) had humiliated his "honour and dignity". V.Sheiman estimated moral damages in the following way: 10 milliard roubles should be compensated by the newspaper "Naviny", 5 milliard roubles – by Syargei Aniska, the author of the article (50 thousand dollars total).

The trial began at 10 o'clock in the morning and finished at a quarter to six in the evening. At the beginning the courtroom wasn't big enough for all-public representatives and press, who wanted to be present at the trial. Thus from 10 o'clock till half past twelve OSCE representative in Belarus Christopher Paniko, members of the Belarusan Helsinki Committee and journalists had been waiting in the corridor. The State Secretary of the Security Soviet V.Sheiman didn't show up on the trial…

On September 29, the last issue of the independent newspaper "Naviny" came out. The Maskowsky court put the newspaper's property under arrest. The court executive Izaryn came to the printing office and ordered to stop printing of the next issue of the newspaper "Naviny". He also confiscated the newspaper's paper. The editorial staff is planning to issue the newspaper under a new name – "Nasha Svaboda" (our freedom).

In October, James Rubin, the press secretary of the US State Department made a statement: "The United States of America consider the growing pressure on the independent press in Belarus to be an escalation of the efforts directed to suppress the freedom of speech. It nothing but violation of its' duties by Belarus in accordance with the documents of the OSCE and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966).

On 8 November, Minsk City court considered a complaint by the editorial board of the newspaper "Naviny" and journalist Syargei Aniska against decision of the Minsk Maskowski district court. Let's remind that on 24 September the court of Maskowski district satisfied a suit brought by State Secretary of Security Council Victar Sheiman against newspaper "Naviny" and journalist Syargei Aniska particularly for publishing an article about V.Sheiman family's house in a village Padlipki "Who in the tower-chambers lives?" Court bound the newspaper "Naviny" and Syargei Aniska to pay off 10 milliard and 5 milliard roubles correspondingly as moral compensation for insulting V.Sheiman's

honour and dignity. The court board consisting of Inna Yablykava, Galina Glukhouskaya and Alena Dulub considered aforementioned complaint lodged by editorial board of the newspaper "Naviny" and Syargei Aniska. Syargei Aniska disproved an assertion by V.Sheiman's representative saying that article published in "Naviny" influenced V.Sheiman mother's state of health and as though for this reason she was forced to go to hospital. Syargei Aniska produced evidence of another nature of V.Sheiman mother's decease. Journalist also drew court's attention to a sum of action, which is $ 45.000 US. Having heard all the arguments the court collegium found no reason to disaffirm Maskowski district court's decision and left it valid. Editorial board of the newspaper "Naviny" is going to appeal against this decision made by Minsk city court but authorities in fact reached their aim – newspaper "Naviny" does not come out any more.

On 15 November, A.Lukashenka extremely negatively assessed the document on Belarusan opposition access to the state-run mass media, which was signed during round-table talks between the authorities and opposition. Making a speech during a meeting devoted to the participation of Belarus' delegation in the summit of the Organisation on Security and Cooperation in Europe in Istanbul Alexander Lukashenka said that this document contradicts every civilised norm. When saying that he referred to the foreign experience: "In Great Britain, for instance, there are such party editions that cover the policy run by particular political party, let say Labour Party and Conservative one. And nobody there says about Labour Party pretensions to mass media belonging to Conservatives and vice versa".

On 27 December, law "About changes and amendments to some legislative acts of the Republic of Belarus" signed by A.Lukashenka came into force. According to this law amendments to the Administrative Code and to the law "About press and other mass media" are to be made. There will appear in the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus articles 167.10 and 167.11. Article 167.10 stipulates responsibility for activities of unregistered or not re-registered political party or non-governmental organisation (warning or fine from 10 to 50 minimum wages). Repeated activities within a year term might be punished by a fine from 50 to 100 minimum wages or by a detention up to 15 days. Article 167.11 stipulates a fine up to 30 minimum wages in case an organisation or political party didn't present to the register body the data about changes in juridical address.

PERSECUTION OF THE OPPOSITION-ORIENTED YOUTH AND YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

A.Lukashenka considers "struggle for youth" to be the main task of his propaganda machine. It is the ground of his policy and his future. He patronises youth organisations that display loyalty to the president. These organisations are granted different privileges and state assistance. The youth that doesn't support A.Lukashenka becomes subject to strict repressions. Courts and other punitive institutions make short work of young opposition members. Under aged boys and girls are taken to custody centres and kept there but none militiaman answered for that.

On December 17, a minor Stanislaw Karashchanka, beaten by unknown people in civil clothes on December 8, 1998 and brought to the militia got a reply on his complaint from the Prosecutor's office in the Central District. The reply says: "The prosecutor's office has examined the case and haven't discovered any facts proving that the militiamen had exceeded their authority. Under such circumstances the Prosecutor's office of the Central District doesn't find sufficient grounds for taking measure by the Prosecutor's office. If you are dissatisfied with this decision, you have a right to appeal to the Minsk Prosecutor's office".

On January 21, in Minsk two minor girls – Lyashkova Tatsyana (14) and Charvyakova Volga (15, a student of the Belarusan Humane Lyceum) were detained. They were distributing leaflets, inviting to the authorised meeting on January 22. An inhabitant of one of the houses, in which the girls were dropping leaflets into mailboxes, detained them. He showed them the identification card of militiamen, dialled 02 and called the car. 30 minutes later a police car arrived and the girls were brought to Soviet Department of Internal Affairs, where they made a report, then called their parents to take their children home.

On January 26, minors Stanislaw Karashchanka and Zmitser Bunchuk were detained in Minsk near Tractor Works. They were sticking leaflets inviting people to join "Malady Front" and the leaflets, which engage in propaganda for national music. "Listen to the Belarusan!" S. Karashchanka and Z. Bunchuk were brought to Partyzansky Department of Internal Affairs, were they made a report. They are accused of violating Art. 143, p.3 – sticking announcement in unsuitable places. Under this article they may be warned or fined in the size of one minimal pay.

On 2 February, a trial over Vadzim Kanapatsky - an activist of Malady Front - was conducted in the Minsk Central Court. He was charged with breaking the article 167 part

2 of the Administrative Offences Code of the Republic of Belarus (utilisation of unregistered symbols). This article provides for administrative amenability varying from warning and fines of different rates to 15 day-term of administrative detention. V.Kanapatsky was detained on 31 January while taking part in opposition action in support of the Congress of democratic forces. During the meeting held on the Square of Paryzhskaya Kamuna V.Kanapatsky stood with the flag of "Youth Front" in his hand. Against the white back- ground of the flag there was a red cross and a shield with the six-pointed cross on it. Policemen, who detained V.Kanapatsky, drew up a report and gave him a sub-poena to appear at the stated time to the court on February 1. But on February 1 trial did not take place because of policemen wish to be thoroughly prepared to the lawsuit. They addressed to the Ministry of Justice to clarify: "whether this flag was registered or not". On February 2 court hearings took place. The representative of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96" Valyantsin Stefanovich was a public defender of V.Kanapatsky during legal proceedings. The judge Anatol Barysionak as a result of legal proceedings brought in a verdict: a minimum administrative punishment, which is the warning.

On February 6, the next in turn congress of the Malady Front took place. The issue, which stood separately on agenda, was the attitude towards the neo-fascist movement Russian National Unity. Since the activity of this organisation is getting more and more active recently the Malady Front has passed a decision to set off against neo-fascists their own public security system. It is planed to set up the teams made up of representatives of the Malady Front. These teams by appearance of people with fascist swastika and other fascist symbols have to catch them and hand over to police stations. In the most populated areas it is planned to introduce "roster" which would be carried out also by representatives of the Malady Front to "deprive the fascists of life space".

On February 14, meeting-procession "Belarus to Europe" organised by the Malady Front was held in Minsk. More than five hundred boys and girls took part in the action. During the action policemen, people in civil and representatives of special services agencies escorted young people. The observer of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96" Kiryla Bazykin was roughed up by policemen. Uladz' Antonaw, Khvedar Zhyvalewsky, Maryia Kunina, Ales Barshchewsky, Aryia Gatalskaya, Yawgen Skochka, Mikhail Malashka, Ales Pitkevich, Zmitser Kas'pyarovich, Andrey Lyakh, Syargey Prasyany and Syargey Pashkevich were detained by policemen during and after the meeting. Among them there were a lot of minors.

On February 15, trials over participants of the traditional meeting-procession "Belarus to Europe" were held in Minsk. Ales Pitkevich, Andrey Lyakh, Syargei Prasyany

and Syargei Pashkevich were warned in the Central district court. Ya.Skochka was sentenced to 10 day-term in administrative detention in the Lenin district court. Uladz Antonaw was brought a verdict 5 days in administrative detention. Banel Earliyash (born in 1948) and Kazimir Kuchun (born in 1953) who tried to stand up for young people were fined in Pershamayski district court.

On March 5, Andrei Dz'vigun, a member of the Malady Front was fined 1 million roubles in the Magiliow Central district court. He was charged with breaking the art. 167.3 (infringement of the law on elections) of the Administrative Code. On March 4 A.Dz'vigun and minor member of the Malady Front Ales Paltaratski were detained while collecting the signatories for Zyanon Paznyak. They did not draw up a report. The parents of A.Paltaratski were not informed about their son's detention. On March 5 Valadar Tsurupanaw, a human rights activist who came to the court to defend A.Dz'vigun, was sentenced to 3 days of administrative arrest together with A.Dz'vigun...

On March 5, participants of the youth anti-Fascist action were detained in Grodna. Policemen with dogs surrounded them in the Savetskaya street. There were detained 39 people. They seized the literature with anti-Fascist contents. The detained people were not drawn up the reports but took pictures. Two hours later the majority of detainees were released. Brothers Stanislaw and Andrei Pachobut (members of the Malady Front) were detained till the court sitting, which was to be held on March 9. Stanislaw Pachobut escaped. His brother Andrei was severely beaten by policemen in the cell.

On 21 April, members of Malady Front Ambrazevich Liavon (a minor), Sharamet Mikhail (a minor as well), Kiiko Natallya and Biaroza Yliya were detained in Varvasheni Street at about 21.15 for distributing the leaflets inviting to take part in traditional "Chernobyl rally", which was permitted by the city authorities and was to be held on 25 April in Minsk. They were taken to the Minsk Central district's Administration of Internal Affairs where the minor members of Malady Front were kept for an hour and a half and then released without giving any information to their parents. N.Kiiko and Y.Biaroza were drawn up reports and then released. The detained young people were confiscated about 1000 leaflets-invitations.

On 25 April, not sanctioned march of youth devoted to the 13th anniversary of Chernobyl catastrophe took place in Crodna at about 21.00 p.m. the marchers were going along Grodna streets flying the national white-red-white flags. There were any slogans or cry outs. The marchers in total silence took torches – a symbol of grief about the Chernobyl victims. 38 young people took part in the procession. The column was driven up by police car. The policemen sprang out of the car and got down to "work". They tried

to catch and draw into the car the participants of the procession. Following some time another car of OMON (special militia troops) soldiers drew up the marchers. Using the police batons and tear-gas they tried to break up a peaceful demonstration. Some policemen had sub-machine-guns. They came to blows. Moreover, it should be emphasised, the policemen and special troops attacked the marchers while they just tried to defend themselves. As a result 14 young people were detained and placed to custody (four out fourteen detained were minors). An innocent passer-by I.Baranaw, resident of the Grodna city, who did not take part in the march and in fight suffered from policemen (he was also detained). The policemen beat detained young people while bringing them to the Leniniski Administration of Internal Affairs of the city of Grodna. Two minors were cut some locks of hair. Three marchers were taken from the aforesaid Administration of Internal Affairs by ambulance. Following some time two of them were back to police station. Nineteen-year-old resident of Minsk City was forced to go to hospital (injury department), for he was broken a nose by the boot blow of policeman. Many participants of this action were forced to turn for medical help. According to a witness a girl from Babruisk had a concussion. On April 26 trial took place. The judge of the Leninski district court of the city of Grodna Yawgen Kaziak sentenced four people to two days of administrative arrest. On the whole the majority of detained people were sentenced and brought verdicts ranging from two up to four days in administrative detention. I.Baranaw was fined 1 million roubles. On April 27 two accused were released. On April 28 people sentenced to tree days of administrative arrest were also discharged.

On 18 May, Zmitser Kaspyarovich – a minor – addressed to the Human Rights Centre “Viasna-96”. In his statement Z.Kaspyarovich wrote the following: “On 19 May at 00.30 in the morning my friend Paval Myagkow and me were detained near the tower of the company “Belsel”. It happened after we hanged on it a white-red-white flag. Then they brought us to police car where they started us beating. With fists they beat myself upon kidneys, with their legs they kicked myself in my back. In short they beat myself black and blue. Every present policeman (at minimum about 7 persons) kicked myself at least one time. Then my friend under threat of violence was ordered to climb the tower to take down the flag. Simultaneously I was fell on the ground spreading hands and legs aside. Two policemen kicked 4-5 times in my abdomen. One of them treaded on my hand. Then we were brought to the Savetski Administration of Internal Affairs where we were kept for 9 hours without accusations. Talking to each other policemen told that there was no article to prosecute us. All our requests to phone and inform our relatives about this happening were rejected. Next day at about 9.00 in the morning a captain, who did not

introduce himself, drew up a report and accused us in hooliganism. Soon after eleven o'clock I was released. But before it they rang up my mother, for I was minor. They phoned my mother just in the morning of the next day. I consider my rights were violated". Paval Myagkow was sentenced to five days of administrative detention.

On 29 May, Malady Front held a race along the Minsk circuitous road under the slogan "Freedom to political victims!" In spite of permission by the Minsk City Executive Council Uladzimir Antonaw, Yawgen Afnagel and Andrej Syargeew were accused of breaking the law and brought to the city Administration of Internal Affairs. Later on Syargei Shynkevich, the driver who escorted the race, was detained and deprived of the driving licence.

On 27 August, "Belarusan musical alternative" in association with youth club "Grunvald" organised a rock concert under motto: "Young people for Belarus!" in Maladzechna (Minsk oblast). Funs and rock-lovers gathered together to listen to their favourite music. This concert was authorised by Maladzechna City Executive Council. But immediately after the beginning of the concert the militia encircled a place where the concert was conducted. Detentions in Maladzechna didn't yield to those in Minsk. S.Yurkevich, D.Dasyukevich, V.Supranovich – co-ordinator of "Belarusan musical alternative", Ya.Prakapovich soloist of rock group "Happy Face" and a lot of minors who came there just to listen to the music were detained. To the question "What for are you detaining?" – militia answered "If there had been reasons for we would have been killing you… "

On 9 October, during a football match Belarus-Italy militiamen beat and detained about 30 young girls and boys who came to support national football team with white-red-white flags on the stadium "Dinamo".

On 20 October, seventeen year old Zmitser Sharamet, eleventh-form pupil of the secondary school № 13, Orsha, and of the same age Zmitser Grablewski who is eleventh-form pupil too, but of the secondary school № 12, Orsha, were detained in Orsha (Vitsebsk region). They were charged with "two-year-old" case. The point is that two years ago boys pulled down red-green flag introduced first by Stalin and then by Lukashenka but with little changes on it and raised red-white-red flag on that place. These colours are considered to be Belarusan national ones. Pupils were released on 22 October. But they instituted criminal proceedings against Z.Grablewski for breaking article 201 (p.2) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus.

In November, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus disaffirmed the decision made by the Minsk Savetski district court regarding the fate of Yawgen Afnagel, 20 year old active member of the Young Front and a student studying history, for a lack of corpus delicti. Yawgen Afnagel was one of the declarants of the Freedom March on 17 October. Yawgen Afnagel wrote a statement about his refusal to take part in an organisation process and preparations for the Freedom March after the Minsk City Executive Committee banned conducting the rally and a meeting in the down town and transferred its conduction to the Bangalor Square. Judge Ina Sheyka paid no heed to this fact and sentenced him to fifteen days of detention in custody centre. During his imprisonment Yawgen Afnagel was once taken to the clinical hospital №9 because of a bad health state.

On 31 November, Grodna City Executive Committee did not authorise conducting an action, “Youth against AIDS,” which was to be held by Malady Front. The City Executive Committee referred to the law on meetings rallies demonstrations and pickets and excused its refusal by saying that the claim for the action didn’t correspond to the law. So, the Grodna authorities are confident that there is only one way of struggle with AIDS it is medicine.

On 6 December, in the evening Vadzim Saranchukow, a student, was detained by the militia in Grodna. He was detained for writing on the trolley anti-presidential slogans. V.Saranchukow spent a night in the Grodna Leninski Administration of Internal Affairs. He was not allowed even to phone home. It is nothing but breach of the law. On December 8 V.Saranchukow stood trial. As a result he was fined one minimum wage.

PERSECUTION OF BUSINESSMEN AND ENTREPRENEURS

Neo-communist A.Lukashenka especially dislikes businessmen and independent by nature people. Since first days of his presidency he has been fighting against such people. As a result of such policy majority of prominent businessmen left the country, against some of then criminal proceedings were instituted (A.Pupeika, A.Samankow, V.Krugavy, A.Klimaw, U.Kudzinaw,…) A.Lukashenka went on his policy in 1999. But this time it was directed against market vendors, "shuttle-tradesmen" and trade unions leaders, who held the series of strikes on the biggest markets of the country.

On 3 April, chairman of the Free Trade Union Valery Levanewsky was detained in Grodna. He was brought to the investigation department where he was questioned as a witness on V.Ganchar's case. The interrogation was conducted by militia lieutenant colonel Ubarevich who demanded Levanewsky to give any information concerning the activities of the Central Election Commission. They didn't draw up a charge sheet and threatened to put him in 15-day detention.

On 26 April, Valery Levanewski, was sentenced to 13 days of administrative arrest for an attempt to get in to reception room of the deputy chairman of the City Executive Committee Mrs.Lawtsel. Some entrepreneurs were not allowed to hold a meeting on issues connected with certification of goods they sold and that's why they tried to clarify the reason of it and to go to the deputy chairman of Grodna Executive Committee. Among them was Valery Levanewski. According to Levanewski there was nothing in common with politics: there were no placards, no appearances of unsatisfied people. When he was curious about why people were not let to the building of the City Executive Committee he was immediately accused of organising an unauthorised meeting and drawn up a report. V.Levanewski states that: "...the court's verdict of this kind had been expected before I went to the Executive Committee. The real reason was that Lukashenka was supposedly going to visit the City of Grodna. That's why they put myself in custody for thirteen days. It's nothing but pure provocation".

In May, deputies assigned by A.Lukashenka introduced into the Criminal Code article 256, which stipulates serious penalties for people who deals with reselling.

On 15 June, trade union of Vitsebsk entrepreneurs temporally stopped its strike in which 900 members of this organisation took part. It happened after the city authorities satisfied their demands and trade union received a guarantee from M.Fedarchuk, deputy chairman of the Oblast Executive Committee.

On 26 June, policemen on the Market Square in Orsha detained Alexander Stalyarow – chairman of the Free trade union of entrepreneurs of the city of Orsha and its district. F.Stalyarow distributed inquiry forms for public interview. The questionnaires contained the questions as follows: "Do you support the Free trade union?" "In what way are you ready to support its demands – meetings, strikes, pickets, money?" "Do you believe the closer contacts between Belarus and Russia improve or make worse the economic situation in our country?" "What is your opinion about Lukashenka's idea to unite the two countries into one state?" Market divisional inspector took Stalyarow to the City Administration of Internal Affairs, where Stalyarow was informed that his case was transferred to the Committee for State Security (KGB). In the end A.Stalyarow was set free, because there was a day off.

On 1-2 July, action of protest was held in Gomel by local entrepreneurs. It was held to show protest against decision of local authorities to cut 1200 trading places in a Central collective farm market were the entrepreneurs worked. By this decision local authorities wanted to make entrepreneurs move to a new market, which is out of city.

On 29 August, a trade union assembly of entrepreneurs was conducted in Orsha on the Market Square. The militia drew up a charge sheet for breaking the law "About meetings and assemblies." Chairman of the city free trade union Viktar Andreew was fine 20 million roubles for assembly conduction on 31 August.

Since 1 September, presidential decree № 14 (issued on August 4, 1997) has entered into force. It says, "goods purchased or sold with breaking the established order (without a quality certificate) are to be confiscated and go to income of the Republic". Everybody who wants to sell anything must pass through complicated state certification (including colour, smell and taste). If a seller tries to sell something without quality certificate his goods would be confiscated. Confiscated goods are sold by the state with inscription saying, "not certificated goods". What is more, the state has the right not to certificate goods in case it is not profitable for it (when certification spending exceeds planned income). In this case the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus is broken. According to article 13 both state and non-state enterprises have equal rights and opportunities to run their business. Presidential decree caused protest. Since 1 September the majority of country's markets has gone on strike without time limit. According to press communications beginning from 1st September 75 per cent of private enterprises from Minsk, Grodna, Navapolatsk, Orsha, Pinsk and other biggest cities of Belarus went on strike.

On 1 November, Minsk City Executive Committee cancelled agreements on rent of space in metro. It was carried out with breaking of the established order. Minsk City Executive Committee deprived of works about 4.000 people – both entrepreneurs and employees. Entrepreneurs and employees set up primary free trade union organisation. On 4 October in the morning about 30 entrepreneurs (mainly women) gathered on the Square of Independence and then made for the office of Belarusan Organisation of Working Women based on Freedom Square. The militia didn't interfere and confined itself to observation.

On 11 November, countrywide warning strike of market vendors was held in Belarus. The entrepreneurs demanded the limitations on trade introduced by presidential decree to be abolished. If these demands are not satisfied market vendors would go on unlimited strike from 1 December 1999.

FACTS OF TORTURES OR INHUMAN TREATMENT WITH IMPRISONED OR DETAINED PEOPLE

Human rights activists repeatedly reported about tortures and inhuman treatment in Belarusan prisons and custody centres. There are also many testimonies of those who have already fallen into the clutches of Belarusan justice. But execution of Freedom March participants became an apotheosis of impunity and lawlessness.

On March 3, Syargei Abadowski, a member of the Central Election Commission on presidential elections sentenced to administrative arrest, was brought to the emergency hospital with diagnosis "high blood-pressure". It was a consequence of a hunger strike against illegal detention declared by Abadowski during the court sitting. In the hospital S.Abadowski was given an emergency medical help and released. He was left two and a half days to be in custody. But nevertheless he had to serve this time after his recovery.

On March 3, Tamara Vinnikava, ex-head of the National Bank, was brought to the intensive care unit of the military hospital with the diagnosis "physical and mental exhaustion". He was placed in a special ward under the guardianship. The day before she addressed to the Belarusan Helsinki Committee for help. She stated that further being under home arrest threatens to her life. In 1998 she was found an oncology disease. And now only surgical operation can safe her life. What is more, needed operation can be performed only in clinical hospital № 8. But there are "no conditions for placing guardianship" in this hospital... As a result T.Vinnikava has been refused medical treatment already for two years. In January 1998 T.Vinnikava's lawyer Ludmila Ul'yashyna addressed with the protest to the General prosecutor's office of the Republic of Belarus and to the Minsk Phrunzenski district Court but in vain. They dismissed the complaint.

On March 5, Viktar Ganchar was enforced by doctors to stop hunger strike (they began forcible feeding of him). Anatol Gurynovich, a member of the Central Election Commition on presidential elections who served his term in the neighbouring cell, heard Viktar Ganchar putting up resistance to doctors. Viktar Ganchar's principal condition – immediate release of all accused members of the Central Election Commission – was not fulfilled. During detention V.Ganchar was not only subject to forcible feeding but also to inhuman treatment. People wearing black clothes and masks to hide their faces bound him to the radiator and then beat him up. They made from him so called "swallow" – a figure of man with his hands and legs tied behind his back.

On 18 August, newspaper "Narodnaya Volya" informed that during five daylong trials over Andrey Klimaw, deputy of the 13th Supreme Soviet, the latter was not fed and did not have walks in isolation ward.

People injured during the clashes with the militia during and after Freedom March, held on October 17 in Minsk, appealed to the Human Rights Centre "Viasna". These testimonies are vivid examples how the law enforcement agencies work and behave in Belarus, for whom physical and moral injuries, heavy beatings of the detained are the professional norm.

Marya Abragimovich (Institute of Linguistics of the Academy of Sciences, assistant, Minsk). "I together with my friend were walking in the Gorky Park. All of a sudden I saw a mess. We decided to sit on the bench and wait. Strangle people in camouflage uniform came up to us, checked our documents and convoyed us in the yards… They brought us to the Leninsky Department of Internal Affairs and started making a report. The accusation was the same for all: breaking social order, bad language. Then they took us to the Partyzansky Department, on our way we had been humiliated. At 6 o'clock special troops arrived to transfer us to the detention centre. In the car there was a mess, there were human bodies on the floor, some people were moaning, we were beaten with truncheons, trampled down. The Special troops making us sing, but I was shocked and failed to recollect a line from any song. But my friend began to sing: "There was a grasshopper in the grass "but they demanded" Sun circle"… They put a truncheon in one man's mouth and at the same time someone was crying: "Further, up to tonsils!" When we were coming out of the car, one militiaman was pushing people out of the car with his legs".

Mikalai Mikhaylavich Ganchar testifies (born in 1962, Minsk). "On our way to the bus, we were beaten and pushed. In the bus they knocked people down and made a heap of people. I found myself at the bottom. There were three or for people above. It was hard, but those who were above me suffered more as they were walked on, jumped on and beaten up".

Yury Adamavich Mukhlya testifies (Minsk): "I was punched and butted… I was thrown in the bus where they didn't allow me to get up and by threats made me lie in unnatural position. When all the detained were gathered we left the Savetsky Department of Internal Affairs. After 20 – 30 minutes the bus stopped and special troops started beating the detained. I was asked questions and every time I answered, they punched in kidneys. The militiaman was laughing and said that it was like drinking beer.

Walking around the bus, the special troops officials walked on me and made stops purposefully to hurt me."

Anatol Alyaksandravich Tsurykaw testifies (70 years old, Minsk): I didn't take part in the clash. When the participants started to run away, I joined them. After several metres, a man in camouflage reached me and heavily beat me with truncheon in the head, then in the leg. My head was heavily bleeding (I don't exaggerate). After that nobody touched me. Some women tried to help me, but they didn't have dressings. Ambulance was called which took me to hospital N 4, where they put stitches, gave me an injection and I had the wound X-rayed. Fortunately, there weren't any cracks in the skull.

Stanislaw Stanislavavich Kavalew testifies (born in 1957, Minsk region): "On October 17 I together with all demonstrators made way of Freedom March. I didn't take part in clashes with police… Part of the demonstrators started to retreat through the park in the direction of the metro. And everyone, who was walking out of the park, was detained. I was seized and dragged to the car. I asked: "Why are you detaining me? Who are you?" I was threatened in response. I was taken to the Savetsky Department of Internal Affairs where they made reports against each of the detained. At 2 or 2.30 at night on October 18 riot police took us from the cell. When I was entering the bus, I was heavily beaten, I fell down and they started kick me. I found myself at the back of the bus. I was thrown on the floor. I heard that others were given the same "treatment" as well. The last people were thrown on those who were on the floor (me as well). We started to suffocate from lack of air. I hear them beating a student. They were cruel that even the riot police officer had to calm them down. After that we were driven somewhere. The officers were walking on our bodies if any started to move. They were beating them again. Later we stopped for about 40 minutes I felt really bad as I have a bad heart. Suddenly I heard one of the detained asking to get up because he felt sick. One of the officers said: "Vomit on the people". I don't remember what was happening later as I had lost consciousness. Hardly had the bus started to move when I recovered. I felt people who were lying on the ground, moving from one side to another. When we arrived, I was the last to come out. But I couldn't stand firmly on my feet and that's why the officers were holding me and the others were kicking and beating me with truncheons. When we left the bus, they convoyed us to the wall of a building (it turned out later that it was the detention centre in Akrestsin Street). We stood against the wall (feet and arms apart) and they continued "execution". A guy in a long leather coat was especially severely beaten up. After some time the officer ordered to stop it, as he didn't react the beatings.

This nightmare night will always be in my memory. Only fascists in concentration camps could humiliate people in such a way.

Pavel Alyakseevich Kaparykha testifies (Minsk): During the Freedom March I was detained by people in civil who hadn't shown any identification. I among 5 another detained was taken to the Savetsky Department of Internal Affairs. After a 4-hours detention our group was transferred to the detention centre in Akrestsin Street. Before getting into a bus, we were so-called "examined" by riot police. In the bus we were made lie on the floor and on our way we were humiliated: we were beaten up, walked on. Any attempt to rise a head has punished by a kick.

Andrei Alyakseevich Kaparykha testifies (Minsk). "During my detention for participation in the Freedom March, I was heavily beaten up by people in civil and then I was taken to the Kastrychnitsky Department of Internal Affairs. The militiamen had not shown their identification, humiliated, beat with truncheons in the back and legs. While getting into a bus I hold my arms behind the back and an officer hit me in kidney in solar plexus here were 10 people in the bus (7 boys, 2 girls and an old woman). We were lying on the floor one on the another between the seats. Any attempt to move was suppressed by threats. Later one of riot police started talking with us one by one. He was interested who we were, what we were, what our salary was. During our talk he used to kick and hit us. I was hit 4 times in kidneys and later in head.

Igar Alyaksandravich Sachanka testifies: "When Freedom March was over, I together with my friends was detained in Pulikhaw Street by people in civil who hadn't shown their identification. During the apprehension we didn't resist, but I was seized by neck, made fall on the ground and pressed by a knee. They gripped my neck so tight that I couldn't answer their question about the identification. Then they took off the belt and tied my arms behind the back with my own belt. I was taken to the Savetsky Department of Internal Affairs where we had been from 17.30 to 00.30. After that all the detained were transferred to the custody centre in Akrestsina Street. Before getting into bus we had to pass through a line of riot police. In the bus we were made fall on the ground and on the way the riot police was constantly outraging they were beating, walking on our backs, humiliating us. Any attempt to rise a head was punished by several blows.

During the action on October 17 in Minsk journalists and leaders of public organisations suffered from the law enforcement agencies as well. A militia officer threw a stone into Valyantsina Figulewskaya (leader of woman's centre in Lida). It resulted in facial laceration Mikola Salavey, newspaper "Navinki" official was detained and beaten up after the march near metro station "Partyzanskaya". Once the prosecutor's office instituted criminal proceedings on fact of developments on October 17, the investigation bodies started to look for March participants with the help of photos.

Yawgen Afnagel is one of the condemned for 15 days for participation in the Freedom March and behind bars he felt a blinding heartache. He managed to hand over a message at liberty saying that wardens refused to send for a doctor and gave him a medicine instead, but the pain was not taken away, on the opposite it increased. The conditions at the detention centre in Akrestsina Street have become more rigid. The wards refuse to hand over foodstuff to the March participants. They introduced a limit – one parcel for 10 days. Earlier, before October 17 one parcel for 5 days had been allowed…

On 13 December, Andrey Klimaw, deputy of the 13th Supreme Soviet, was heavily beaten up by the officers of the investigation ward of the Board Administration of Internal Affairs. After that Andrey Klimaw was brought to the Leninski district court where the hearings of the criminal case instituted against him and the staff members of the open joint-stock venture "Andrey Klimaw & Cº" were held. The OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus expressed concern about A.Klimaw's beating up and called the Belarusan government "Immediately investigate this incident and to provide Andrey Klimaw with the appropriate medical assistance in the appropriate medical establishment."

On 13 December, ex-head of the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus Tamara Vinnikava gave an interview to the radio BBC. Tamara Vinnikava was arrested on 14 January 1997 and being guarded disappeared on 8 April 1999. Tamara Vinnikava was accused under several articles of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus: power abuse, large scale embezzlement, forgery and etc. In her interview to the radio BBC T.Vinnikava told the following: "I was kept ten months in a cell meant for one person. And there is no need to say how the KGB prison is designed – it looks like a coffin. It was made so to pressurise psychologically the prisoners… The building was built up in 1926. The walls of the prison saw all tortures of 1937. There is no water at all in the cell either hot or cold one. So you can't wash up yourself if there is a need for. Only thrice a day according to the strict order you'll be brought to the "public" WC meant for all prisoners. I am a woman but only men guarded me… I was deprived of a possibility to correspond with my relatives and to meet them either. I was not allowed to use services of a lawyer. I was only allowed to speak with him through doubled glass in the "guestroom". I was deprived of medical assistance… After ten months of such conditions they released me on written pledge not to flee from prosecution. But I was not allowed to back home. They allowed me to back to my son's flat and perhaps only for its close location to the KGB and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. So I was under strict supervision of the "best people" of

the regime. All days long there were these people in the flat… As you understand it's impossible to escape from such people. It's very difficult…"

On 21 December, the US State Department made a statement: " Slaughter of Andrey Klimaw, deputy of the 13th Supreme Soviet, points at the deepness of political crises in Belarus and its self-isolation from Euro-Atlantic community of democratic states. Deputy of the Supreme Soviet was beaten up in prison by guards. He has been kept in pre-trial detention since February 1998 under politically motivated accusations. Belarusan authorities are to take measures for investigation of this incident and to punish guilty men. The USA government calls Belarusan authorities to set free Andrey Klimaw and other political prisoners."

On 24 December, the Prosecutor's office of the Republic of Belarus declined the petition of Andrey Klimaw's defence to institute criminal proceedings against people involved in A.Klimaw's slaughter. Prosecutor's office representatives stated that they carried out a check and the latter proved that the guard actions were legal ("forcible bringing to the court"). It should be mentioned that the ambulance was called and according to first medical examination Andrey Klimaw had cranium trauma and abdomen trauma.

PERSECUTION OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND MOVEMENTS

On January 26, A.Lukashenka signed a decree №2 "About certain measures on regulation of work of political parties, trade unions and other public organisations". By this decree he introduced binding re-registration of public organisations. In conformity with this decree from February 1 to June 1, 1999 the re-registration of political parties, public organisations, trade unions and its symbols will be carried out.

On January 26, The Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus refused to satisfy a complaint lodged by the Belarusan Student trade union "Solidarity". The address to the Supreme Court was caused by refusal of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus to register student trade union. According to Yuras Gubarevich, a representative of the initiative group of the trade union "Solidarity", the next step will be "appealing against this decision in a proper way". A complaint will be addressed to the General prosecutor's office of the Republic of Belarus.

On February 8, leadership of the Federation of Belarusan trade unions demanded from authorities to re-consider the decree signed by president on 26 January 1999 about state registration and re-registration of political parties, trade unions and public organisations. The authorities didn't pay attention to this apply.

On 1 April, five militiamen headed by colonel Garkavy came to the office of public organisation "Civil initiatives" under the pretence that there were some drugs and weapons kept on the premises. The office was searched in the presence of witnesses.

On 18 August, the Ministry of Justice refused to register Belarusan Association of Young Politicians. Association's chairman Anatol Lyabedzka commented on this refusal by saying that it was done basing on editing remarks while the real reason of it was political one. Anatol Lyabedzka as deputy of the 13th Supreme Soviet is a prominent and active politician and is well known outside Belarus.

On 19 August, at about 18 p.m. a group of militiamen burst into the building of the Belarusan Free Trade union motivating it by the hidden explosive appliance. The explosion should have taken place at 8 p.m. Militia men carried out a search in the room. As a result they confiscated 30 thousand leaflets with the call of young politicians to the Belarusan citizens to take part in the "Rally of freedom". They drew up a report about confiscation of leaflets and having forgotten about the bomb went away.

On 24 August, five militiamen burst into the Headquarters of the United Civic Party. They did not respond to demand to present their identity cards and began carrying out a search. During the search they confiscated newspapers and leaflets. "Beloruskaya

Delovaya Gazeta" found itself among "arrested". Lieutenant Kastrytski led the group of militiamen. When Uladzimir Navasyad, deputy of the 13th Supreme Soviet requested Kastrytski to show search warrant, he promised to place the deputy behind bars up to 15 days…

On 18 September, phone connection was turned off in the headquarters of the Free Belarus trade union, which is located on 24 Zakharaw St., Minsk. On 19 September there a search was conducted in the headquarters guided by divisional inspector. The reason of search conducting was … a mined office of trade union. But it was conducted in vain. The militia found nothing but confiscated agitation materials. On 28 September the location was again "visited", but this time by four representatives of financial inspection who demanded to produce papers without the right to do it. On 29 September 24 militia men blocked a car, which was to go to Orsha with literature about trade union movement and stationery, near the entrance to the headquarters at 19.00. There were Eva Savicka, expert of Warsaw office of American Centre of International Solidarity of Workers, interpreter Liudmila Kaplunik and driver Ales Kruchynin in the car. Simultaneously, they encircled the building where the headquarters of the Free Belarus trade union is located motivating it again by information they got about mine in the building. The militia moved people living in a house № 24 Zakharaw St. out. Militiamen obeying the order of men in civilian clothes carried a search in the building but again found nothing. After that militiamen twice searched personal belongings of trade union's staff. But they again found nothing. Consul of Republic of Poland was present while militiamen searched the car.

These fact are evidence of authorities' concern about trade unions' activity and about theirs intention to held actions of protest in the biggest cities of Belarus on 30 September.

In October, re-registration of political parties and public organisations came to an end. According to its results two political parties – the Party of Common Sense and the Christian Democratic Party – and two 211 non-governmental organisations didn't pass through registration procedure. Among non-governmental organisations the Belarusan Association of Young Politicians – the biggest and the most influential one was not "re-registered."

DISCRIMINATION OF BELARUSAN CITIZENS WITH DISTINCTION OF LANGUAGE AND RELIGION

On January 20, the secretariat of the Belarusan Language Association (BLA) named after Frantsysk Skaryna made a statement. It says that both an agreement on equal rights of citizens and a covenant on equal possibilities for subjects of economy contradict to the widely accepted diplomatic traditions. These documents were signed on December 25, 1998 in Moscow by the President of the Republic of Belarus A.Lukashenka and the President of the Russian Federation B.Yeltsin. And what is more they were written only in one language – Russian. By doing so, they openly expressed their disrespect to one of the official languages of the Republic of Belarus."

Belarus became the first country among new independent states of the former Soviet Union where from 16 till 23 February 1999 was held a population census. The rest countries referring to the economic obstacles and thinking the year 2005 is still far off do not harry to do the same. Though the economic situation in Belarus can hardly be considered the best among those of the former Soviet republics Belarusan authorities had still held the census. Then why Belarusan authorities have done considerable expenses today? Much one can understand after familiarising oneself with questionnaire proposed to fill in. Three questions in it are devoted to the same matter – to the language. The first is "your mother tongue", the second – "language you speak at home" and the third – "language you have a good command of"... Everybody who is acquainted with language situation in Belarus will at once understand what it was done for. The Belarusan language in Belarus has been wiped out at least for last two centuries. Short period of renascence caused by the collapse of the USSR after Lukashenka came to power gave up its place to the revisionist policy run by the authorities with respect to Belarusan language. Again educational establishments and particularly secondary schools are closed down. Currently even in the capital city of the country less than seven per cent of the first-formers learns Belarusan language besides there are no colleges and higher educational establishments where all the subjects and lectures would be delivered in Belarusan language... Perhaps Belarusans have learned Russian for this time? No, for sure! The language the majority of people in Belarus speaks scientists called "trasyanka" (it is a mixture of Belarusan and Russian languages). Belarusan president himself speaks "trasyanka". It's understood that having answered to the first question and having called the Belarusan to be the mother tongue a lot of Belarusans fall thinking about the second question and following our president will call their "trasyanka" to be Russian language. If the initiators of the population census would fail even after the second question as though just in case the third question was invented – "language you have a good

command of" (take notice "language" not "languages"). The response will be for sure the Russian language... So, all the questions are provoking the same answer... It should be also noted that questionnaire lists were first printed only in Russian which is by itself a constitutional tort. It has been done so regardless of the official status of the Belarusan language. Just after numerous protests a part of the questionnaire lists was printed in excess in the Belarusan language. It goes without saying that this popular census will be turned into a kind of referendum. It's clearly understood that the results of this census will be used by the ruling regime to demonstrate that the Belarusans – indigenous population – are the minority in their own country and that the policy run by Lukashenka is not his invention but natural "historical justice"... It should be mentioned that the population census itself has been conducted with numerous contraventions. The agents offered only Russian variants of questionnaire. So it was necessary to ask for Belarusan variant in case it was wanted. People were prompted "right" answers if they were thinking over the responses to the offered questions. There were cases when they put down even not asking wanted answer: "the Russian language". In the military units the soldiers were dictated by the commanders what language should be regarded mother tongue. In the countrysides lots of people were not even asked at all. In short everything has been done to achieve an appropriate for the authorities result, which was needed first of all for the "famous integrator".

On 17 April, Tadevush Gavin, chairman of the Poles Association of Belarus, was detained for holding a picket in support of Polish schools in Belarus. Court hearings on this case took place on 21 April in the Leninski district court of Grodna. Court's resolution said: "Tadevush Gavin as initiator of the picketing held on 12 March used a placard saying "vice-premier U.Zamyatalin, deputy chairman of the Oblast Executive Committee M.Birukova, chairman of the Navagaradak Executive Committee A.Lis suppress the Polish language!" The trial found him guilty and accused of insulting Belarusan officials. T.Gavin was fined 115 million roubles (approximately 300 US dollars).

On 11 May, a search was conducted in the premises of the Belarusan Association of Belarusan Language. For one hour militiamen searched for a bomb.

On 24 May, children of the nursery school № 99 were tested by speech therapist in Gomel. Among them was Frantsishak Yawseenka who from the early childhood spoke only the Belarusan language. Tests were carried out in the Russian language in the absence of Frantsishak Yawseenka's mother. Speech therapist Prymakova claimed that she did not speak and does not want to speak the Belarusan language. Given the outcomes of the test speech therapist concluded that Frantsishak Yawseenka was

mentally retarded boy (does not understand the meaning of some Russian words). He was moved up into the special group for mentally retarded children.

In June, the Union of Poles in Belarus lodged a complaint against the policy run by the town' authorities in the field of education. It was aimed at defending children' right to be taught in the Polish Language. The Navagradak District Executive Committee decided not to open first classes in the schools and to build a new school where all the subjects would be taught in the Polish language. So this decision was appealed against. Vasil Alyakhnovich, judge of the Navagaradak's court, considered this suit to be illegal.

On 27 August, newspaper "Narodnaya Volya" reported that the Grodna City Executive Committee did not authorise to hold picketing against the ousting of the Belarusan language from the schools on 1 September. Today in Grodna there are only two schools where the part of subjects are taught in the Belarusan language.

On 7 November, priest of the Belarusan autocephalous Orthodox Church father Yan went on hunger strike in a settlement Pagranichny, Grodna region. This decision connected with local authorities refusal to register this church and to give a plot of land to build a church on it. Father Yan is going to be on hunger strike until local authorities register a parish and give a strip of land for building a church in a settlement Pagranichny. By this decision local authorities breached constitutional provision saying, "All the religions and denominations are treated equally".

EXACERBATION OF CROSS-NATIONAL RELATIONS

On February 5, members of the fascists organisation Russian National Unity (RNU) beat up activists of public initiative "Charter-97" Andrey Sannikaw (international co-ordinator of the "Charter-97"), Zmitser Bandarenka (member of organising committee of "Charter-97") and journalist Aleg Byabenin near the Victory Square in Minsk. Accidental passer-by – an officer of armed forces – was beaten up too. Andrey Sannikaw was brought to the hospital № 2. He had bridge of the nose broken and some broken ribs. After A.Byabenin medical examination doctor pointed out on numerous blow-steps. Youngsters of the RNU were headed by mature man with swastika on the sleeve. They used foul language and cried out humiliating slogans "Jews!" "If you want to live then get out!" and etc.

On March 3, the prosecutor's office of Baranavichy town at last replied to the allegation done by M.Severtsaw, a chairman of the Baranavichy town's council of the BPF. The application addressed to the Baranavichy's prosecutor's office says, "in the town of Baranavichy the organisation "Russian National Unity" (RNU), which is not registered in the Republic of Belarus, is acting. This foreign organisation is spreading chauvinistic ideas and calling to violent actions which contradicts the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus. By its leaflets and newspapers such as "Russkii poryadok" (Russian order), "Russkii vestnik" (Russian bulletin) the Russian National Unity exasperates inter-national enmity in the country. This foreign organisation openly conducts its meetings in Baranavichy and tries to draw into its ranks and to bend to its will as much youth as possible in order to "set up Russian world order". Proceeding from aforesaid and taking into account that we are the citizens of independent and sovereign country, we demand an immediate decision of this question and take adequate measures to stop the activities of the chauvinistic and Fascist organisation. Please let us know about taken measures". The Baranavichy prosecutor's office took the following measures in response: the chairman of the local organisation of the BPF M.Severtsaw and the secretary of the local council of the BPF were called for and ordered to give the names and home addresses of the Russian National Unity members. Only under these conditions the prosecutor's office will get interested in the activities run by the fascists.

On 1 June, on the monument to the prisoners of the Brest ghetto in Brest unknown people depicted Fascist swastika. It happened repeatedly. Arkadz Blyakher, chairman of the centre "Holocaust" reported that last time following the same happening militia officials said "there is no damages that is why there is no need to kick up a racket."

On 15 June, the Minsk City Executive Committee did not authorise conducting the meeting devoted to the anniversary of the Fascist German's invasion to the Soviet Union. The Belarusan Popular Front, the United Civic Party and the Belarusan Social-Democratic Party planned to hold the meeting under the slogan "No to the War! No to the Fascism and Dictatorship!"

On 30 June, on the eve of the Belarus' liberation from German-fascists invaders Belarusan village Mikalayewka (Svetlagorsk region, Gomel oblast) was attacked by "Golden eagle" – Russian "military-patriotic" detachment from Surgut. 130 people in uniform (young guys and their tutors – veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Chechnya) imitated the seizure of village by punishers and then its liberation. The villagers were not informed of conducting the "game" of this kind, during which the smoke and explosive appliances were used. During this "game" as hostage 20 villagers were driven together in local school. Young guys burst into the homes of peace inhabitants, broke off their hands, made them fall to the ground, said spiteful things. The Russian flag was hoisted over the village soviet. This action was financed by entrepreneur Anatol Silivonchyk Belarusan by birth. He tried to set off moral losses with help of forty bottles of vodka. Members of the "Golden eagle" club were detained in Babruisk. Guys and their tutors were deported from Belarus. As far as A.Silivonchyk is concerned he was taken to investigation ward. A.Silivonchyk's barrister is Vera Stramkowskaya. By this action they violated human rights of Belarusan citizens. As far as we know the members of the "Golden eagle" club were in Belarus by invitation of Belarusan Patriotic Union of Youth, which was set up under patronage of Alexander Lukashenka after he came to power.

On 11 July, Minsk city authorities banned previously authorised antifascist meeting and rock concert of famous Belarusan rock groups. The reason was a lack of registration certificate on sound amplifier as though it could lead to fire. Antifascist actions are forbidden in Belarus with a strange regularity whereas nobody does not pay attention to actions of pro-fascist organisations.

On 8 September, about ten youngsters (representatives of Russian National Unity) tried to provoke peaceful demonstration participants during festive rally of opposition and a meeting dedicated to the Day of Belarusan military glory (485 years ago the troops of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania defeated those of Moscow Principality in 1514 near Orsha). They clutched at black Belarusan speaking man. But his friends stood up for him. They came to blows and neo-Nazis were forced to back down. Demonstration participants caught two Russian National Unity members and handed them over to the militia.

On 19 December, Barys Khamaida was beaten up near his house in Vitsebsk at about 17.30. Barys Khanonavich Khamaida is an honourable member of the Human Rights Centre “Viasna,” editor-in-chief of the independent newspaper “Vybar,” winner of Ales Adamovich prize for active and uncompromising political activity for the benefit of democracy and human rights. One week before the happening a captain of the KGB Lebedzyew phoned B.Khamaida and asked him to come to the KGB for interrogation. B.Khamaida declined this “invitation” and answered that there some legal mechanisms to make people come for interrogations to a state body. Responding to that the captain said that B.Khamaida would regret about. The threat of the captain came true in a week time. When Barys Khamaida was approaching his house all of sudden 6 men in civil appeared and began beating him up. Bandits trampled B.Khamaida under foot and kicked him up. They took away the bag with the documents and disappeared. It goes without saying that militia found anybody. This was not first case when the Belarusan citizens belonging to the Jew nationality were beaten up for active participation in social life of the country. It’ll be enough to remind the case of Yury Khashchevatski beating up in 1997 who made a film about A.Lukashenka “Ordinary president.” In the beginning of 1999 Leanid Mindlin was severely beaten up. Leanid Mindlin made a film “Fear” about dictatorship in Belarus. Following B.Khamaida’s beating up the Human Rights Centre “Viasna” made a statement about “State anti-Semitism policy in Belarus.”

PERSECUTION OF SEXUAL MINORITIES

In April, Edward Tarletski, the head of the League of Sexual Minorities (LSM) called mass media representatives to inform that the League was going to start struggle against flagrant discrimination of sexual minorities. As it is known, the Ministry of Justice hampers the registration of the League, motivating it by the fact that "in accordance with last changes in the law on public organisations and unions every organisation should present not less than 50 people as its' founders. Certainly the League has such number of people but Mr. Tarletski believes that to accept that would mean to submit a judicial lawlessness caused by the state. The heads of the League was also offended by a recent conference on the subject "Destructive consequences of international projects on sexual education" initiated by Belarusan excruciate. Besides the fact the conference approved the decision to resist the programmes of sexual education worked out by UNO and UNESCO, there were calls to exterminate gays and lesbians by death penalty as well as the doctors who carry out abortions. To Edward Tarletski mind such slogans pronounced by priests are nonsense. Such policy has already had its consequences. Employees of the Sexological Centre are forbidden to appear on Belarusan radio; the Ministry of education has been trying to introduce a course of sexual education in schools for 4 years already which contradicts all the international norms. The League is going to hold a number of pickets against homophobia compressed by the church and against the refusal to register the organisation. The League will also act within the International Organisation of gays and lesbians the member of which it is and which participates in the UNO activities as a consultant. "Evidently, the authorities ignore the fact that the League is occupied not only with psychological rehabilitation of gays and lesbians but also helps AIDS patients and protects people raped in prison", - says Mr. Tarletski. Mr. Tarletski also drew the number received from confidential sources of the Ministry of Internal Affairs: 19 people have been murdered within the past year for being gay. Militia doesn't hide this fact but demonstrates unwillingness to pay attention to it. That makes gays to speak up for themselves and to protect themselves, admits Mr. Tarletski. The more so as neo-fascist groups' assaults happen regularly lately.

On 20 August, the militia committed illegal actions in the centre of Minsk City (public garden near the Liberty Square). Unusually worn young people with long hairs drew "militia's attention". Militia officers in uniform and those in civil pushed young people into a bus where they were searched. As militia victims supposedly belonged to homosexuals they were humiliated. All the detained were delivered to Administration of Internal Affairs. They took their fingerprints, checked the papers and drew up far-fetched

charge sheets. The militia excused its actions in the following way “city-wide action is being held and that’s why one cannot confide in papers”.

PERSECUTIONS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE "VIASNA" AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

On January 14, at 22.00 the officials of the Soviet Department of Internal Affairs came to the flat of the chairman of public reception of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96" Lyubow Luniova. They gave her a subpoena, saying that she was to come on January 16 to the Central Department to draw up a report for participation in a non-authorised meeting on December 6 dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The thing is that on February 6, a 2-month time, during which against a citizen can be instituted administrative proceedings, comes to an end.

On January 15, the Brest City Executive Committee didn't authorise to stage pickets against violation of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus – integration with Russia. Uladzimir Vyalichkin, an activist of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96" submitted all necessary papers but in vain. The pickets were to take place on January 23 and 29. In the City Executive Committee refusal it's said that Savetskaya Street, in which U.Vyalichkin planned to stage a picket under the decision of the Brest City Executive Committee № 887 from the 15 of October, 1998 is one of the places where it's prohibited to stage meetings or pickets.

In the early morning of 15 February, custom officials in Brest customhouse inspected Tatsyana Revyaka, staff member of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96". While inspecting they gave heed to the human rights materials (Review on human rights in Belarus prepared by "Viasna-96", the bulletin "The Right to Freedom" and diskette with her own information). The expert on literature was called. As a result all the information on the diskette was wiped out.

On February 24, the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96" held a picket in Yakub Kolas Square in Minsk. It was devoted to the human rights problems in the country and apart from that it had anti-Fascist content.

On March 17, member of the BPF "Adradzhennie" and well known human rights activist Mikalai Zan'ka was sentenced to 10 days in administrative detention in the town of Gantsavichy (Brest region). The reason was as follows. On March 17 Mikalai Zan'ka was present at court hearings in the courtroom, where the case about rehabilitation of Sviatlana Varvashevich at her work was considered. When judge Budnik went out to the judge's room to make final decision Mikalai Zan'ka chanced to be a witness of a gross infringement of the law. He saw that the district's prosecutor Siargei Turavets, who didn't participate in consideration of this case, was handing over the folder with the case of

Sviatlana Varvashevich to the chairman of the court. Then Mikalai and his friends saw the court's secretary Natallia Muha passing this folder from the chairman of the court back to the judge Budnik, who took it and went into the sitting room to announce a verdict. Mikalai Zan'ka demanded to stop the law breaking... As a result he was detained by policemen that were called by the judge. They drew up charge sheet.

On 22 and 28 April, two pickets were held in Minsk by the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96", which were devoted to the numerous facts of human rights violations in Belarus. In April, Uladzimir Vyalichkin, leader of the Brest initiative group on creating the "Viasna-96" branch in this city, was fined 10 million roubles. He was accused for unauthorised picketing. On February 21 he was detained by policemen on Brest market. He held placards saying "No to Belarusan-Russian union!" "16 May – the day of presidential elections!" after this U.Vyalichkin was instituted proceedings under Article 167 (p.1) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus. Final verdict was brought just after four court sittings.

On 6 May, a press conference was held in the headquarters of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96" with participation of relatives of Raman Radzikouski, Anatol Gawrilaw and Vicar Yancheuki who were charged with assassination of Yawgen Mikalutski, chairman of the State Inspection Committee of Magileu oblast. These people were simultaneously charged with attempt upon a life of president Lukashenka. Mothers of the accused addressed with an open letter to the presidents of the USA, Russia and Belarus – Bill Clinton, Boris Yeltsin and Alexander Lukashenka – with request to do best of they could to make the process open. Mothers asked to allow the public representatives to court hearings as well as the press and relatives.

On 15-16 May, Economic-Juridical Lyceum of Baranavichy held an educational seminar devoted to human rights issues in Lyakhavichy. The first day of the scheduled programme was productive one. The participants of the programme heard through the following lectures: "Principal human rights: history and the present time" and "Right to life". The morning of the next day, 16 May, began for the seminar participants as well as for the lectures and organisers from the search in the rooms of the local hotel they stayed in. Staff member of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96" Tatsyana Revyaka says: "While I was sleeping my room was entered by two men without knocking at the door. One of them was in police uniform another one – in civilian clothes." "We must examine your personal belongings", -- it was the response to my question: "Who are you?" "Is it a search?" -- I asked and heard the reply: "No, we just examine it." Policemen and unknown men in civil clothes searched the whole room: a wardrobe, a table and my

personal belongings. They found nothing and left the room. After dressing myself I went to the corridor to wonder what was going on next and saw Ales Gorbach – responsible for the seminar – being escorted by these two men. Some minutes later they were back to take my colleague Valiantsin Stefanovich. When I asked where and what for they were taking Valiantsin Stefanovich they replied: “For clarifying some things!” The next meeting with representatives of the authorities took place again in the hotel when they returned to take explanations of the reason of our staying in Lyakhavichy. An official of the Criminal Investigation Department using my words wrote the “explanation”, which I refused to sign, for it was written in the Russian language whereas I was speaking Belarusan. He agreed and proposed to me to write explanation. To my question why he didn’t write and speak the Belarusan language investigator answered that legal proceedings are done in the Russian language and added that he would make lots of mistakes if he wrote in the Belarusan. Police officials proposed to bring all the participants of the seminar to the bus station in police car – in fact to deport them. Young people refused such a service and they left “very hospitable” Lyakhavichy on their own.

On 8 July, Navapolatsk authorities banned conducting the mournful rally devoted to the anniversary of a last year tragedy. Alyaksei Filipchnka, barrister and human rights activist, burned himself near the building of the town court. It necessary to remind that A.Filipchanka did this act to show the protest against attempts of authorities to take away the flat belonging to A.Voranava, his client…The inhabitants of Navapoltsk were forced to hold sorrowful rally on the place of an authorised picketing devoted to the same happening. After picketing representatives of human rights organisations “Viasna-96”, “Charter 97” and Belarusan Helsinki Committee laid flowers on a place of self-burning and on A.Filipchanka’s grave.

On 10 September, BPF “Adradzhennie” held a picket near the Tractor Works. During picketing Zmitser Bunchuk was detained by militia officers for spreading bulletin “Youth for Freedom”. They brought Z.Bunchuk to the Minsk Partyzansky Administration of Internal Affairs where they confiscated the bulletins. After interference of Vadzim Kanapatsky, chairman of Malady Front’s Human Rights commission, in this case they let Z.Bunchuk go and returned confiscated bulletins.

On 23 September, court hearings of administrative case instituted against Aleg Vouchak, former investigator of the Prosecutor’s office and actual chairman of non-governmental organisation “Legal Assistance to the Population”, were held in the Minsk Moscow district court. Aleg Vouchak was brought to book for taking part in a meeting on 27 July (unofficial Independence Day). The court terminated the case for a lack of corpus delicti.

On 4 October, about ten militiamen in uniform and those in civil from Central Administration of Internal Affairs burst into the headquarters of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96" based on Kisyalova St. in Minsk. There were the parents of children who died on 30 May on Nyamiga metro station at this time in location of "Viasna-96". They came to meet with journalists who prepare a book about tragic events on Nyamiga River. Militia officers took passport data of all people who were at that time in the office and journalists' explanations. The examination of the location with "elements" of search without search warrant lasted from 18.00 to 22.00. As a result they confiscated two computers, two printers, a modem and all the issues of the bulletin "The Right to Freedom" they could found. It should be pointed out that a part of confiscated equipment belongs to the USA (it was rented).

On 27 October, justice administration of the Minsk City Executive Committee began the scheduled check-up of the public organisation "Legal Assistance to the Population." Organisation's chairman A.Vouchak said that this examination was connected with human rights activities run by the organisation and legal assistance to people suffered during Freedom March on 17 October.

On 10-11 November, international conference on efficiency of legal assistance and protection of lawyers was held in Minsk. It was organised by the "Human Rights Centre" and "Legal Assistance to the Population" organisations. Well known politicians, lawyers, human rights activists from Belarus, Russia, Poland, England and the USA took part in work of the conference. The subject discussed is of extreme importance for Belarus, for here lawyers of principle and human rights activists face strict resistance from the authorities' part. There are a lot of examples proving it. Lawyers are deprived of licences (case of Gary Paganyaila and Nadzeya Dudarava); though there is a lawyer immunity during court sessions provided by the law criminal proceedings were instituted against Vera Stramkowskaya because of her demand to present material evidence (40 bottles of cognac seized from Vasil Staravoitaw). US assistant secretary of State department Harold Koh pointed out that the USA is aware of political situation in Belarus including that with human rights. The USA government is concerned about human rights violations in Belarus, said Harold Koh, and we are guided by the policy of "selective contacts" and this means that the whole economic assistance excepting for humanitarian aid and some of educational programs are suspended. Harold Koh stated that Daniel Spekhard's back to Belarus does not mean normalisation in relationships between Belarus and the USA, it won't take place until Belarusan authorities make real steps towards democracy respect for human rights. During this conference V.Stefanovich, staff member, appeared with report about activity of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna".

On 12 November, Ales Byalatski, chairman of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna" was summoned to the Minsk Central district court. He was charged with breaking the article 172 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus (illegal manufacturing and spreading of published production). This means that the bulletin "The Right to Freedom" was published as though with a circulation more than 299 copies (only this number is permitted for editions registered in a set by the law form to be published according to the law on press in Belarus). Ales Byalatski managed to prove that in a charge sheet drawn up on 4 October after illegal search in the office of "Viasna" there was no information about number of confiscated bulletins, and that only another charge sheet which was drawn up in the Central Administration of Internal Affairs did mention the number of confiscated copies. As a result court hearings were postponed.

On 15 November, prominent lawyer Gary Paganyaila brought an action against President's Administration and Uladzimir Matskevich particularly, chairman of the Committee for State Security (KGB). The reason was as follows: a piece of news transmitted on TV-program "Panarama" on 30 August said, "… an inter-departmental commission headed by the chairman of the Committee for State Security Uladzimir Matskevich was created by the order of the President of the Republic of Belarus. Leading lawyers and specialists in the field of law were included to this commission. The objectives of aforementioned commission are preparing documents of so called "loud criminal cases" for the head of state and expressing its own opinion about not only the outcomes of investigation but the course of investigation". Gary Paganyaila believes that a new anti-constitutional body was created to compete the Prosecutor General and lower ranking prosecutors.

On 18 November, Ales Byalatski, chairman of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96", was detained at around 4 p.m. in the Central Administration of Internal Affairs. He and some other staff members of "Viasna-96" came there to take back Ales Byalatski's computer, which was illegally confiscated together with other equipment on 4 October from the centre's headquarters. It should be mentioned that equipment belonging to the USA and rented by "Viasna-96" is still under arrest. So, Ales Byalatski was detained and taken to the Savetski Administration of Internal Affairs. Ales Byalatski was one of the declarants of the Freedom March, which took place in Minsk on 17 October. And that's why he is charged under article 167.1 (part 2) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus (organisation of the unauthorised rally). Having kept Ales Byalatski in the Administration of Internal Affairs for three hours they drove him to the custody centre on Akrestsin Street. On 19 November a trial over A.Byalatski must have taken place. But

interference of Belarusan opposition delegation in Istanbul forced the authorities to set Ales Byalatski free after keeping him one day in custody.

On 23 November, court hearings of the administrative case instituted against chairman of the Human Rights Centre “Viasna-96” began in the Minsk Savetski district’s court. Ales Byalatski was charged with organisation of unauthorised rally after Freedom March on 17 October and not taking corresponding measures to preserve social order. While getting acquainted with the case materials, which were submitted to the court right before court hearings, it turned out that the charge sheet was drawn up with numerous mistakes. According to it Byalatski Alyaksei Victaravich was to blame (when the real name of the defendant is Byalatski Alexander Victaravich). More over it was not dated. But nevertheless judge Ina Sheika started the process. Ales Byalatski said that he was one of the declarants of the Freedom March on 17 October. But the Minsk City Executive Committee changed without grounds the form of the event. Instead of demonstration it permitted to conduct a meeting and transferred the place of conducting to the Bangalor Square. Ales Byalatski was a speaker during the meeting and there were no violations at all at that time. Ales Byalatski announced that the meeting was over and he proposed participants to go home. To the judge’s question whether he felt responsibility for the developments after the meeting Ales Byalatski responded that he pleads not guilty and is confident it is authorities that must assume responsibility for what happened after the meeting. Ales Byalatski pointed out that the putting the militia barrage cordons itself caused people’s aggressiveness. And nothing would happened if the column had gone to the Independence Square. It was not needed to beat up people said Ales Byalatski. And there is no excuses to the special militia troops actions. Ales Byalatski’s lawyer asked to terminate the case, as its materials were not evidence and the militia fabricated them. Judge Sheika didn’t consent with it and postponed court hearings till 26 November.

On 26 November, Judge Anatol Barysionak considered the papers of the administrative case instituted against Ales Byalatski. Court hearings were held in the Minsk Central district court. Chairman of the Human Rights Centre “Viasna”, Ales Byalatski, simultaneously is an editor-in-chief of the bulletin “The Right to Freedom”. He was convicted of breaking the art. 172.1 (part 8) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus (unauthorised producing and spreading of published materials). From the papers submitted to the court by the prosecutor’s office follows that a circulation of some issues of the bulletin “The Right to Freedom”, which were illegally confiscated from the headquarters of the Human Rights Centre “Viasna”, exceeds 300 copies what is nothing but the breach of the law on press of the Republic of Belarus. But while seizing

the bulletins from the "Viasna" office and drawing up a charge sheet militiamen didn't mention the number of confiscated bulletins. One more charge sheet appeared during court hearings, which was drawn by militiamen in the location of the Central Administration of Internal Affairs. When this report had been drawing up neither Ales Byalatski nor other staff members of "Viasna" were present. Given that Ales Byalatski stated that there were no proofs of abuse. As a result of court sitting the judge Anatol Barysionak imposed a fine 10 minimum wages and ordered to wipe out the exceeding number of confiscated bulletins.

On 17 December, there happened an incident in the Baranavichy City court. The lawyer Zoya Gawdzei came in the study of the judge T.Ruzhyk to hand her documents about her participation in the court hearings. The judge began shouting at her saying that Zoya Gawdzei always defends opposition politicians on the trials. Zoya Gawdzei closed the door and made for the courtroom. When judge T.Ruzhyk began the process she saw that Zoya Gawdzei recorded the process on the tape. T.Ruzhyk again began shouting at the lawyer right before the audience. Zoya Gawdzei felt unwell. She asked to send somebody for a doctor. The judge began shouting at the lawyer yet more heavily demanding health certificate. Zoya Gawdzei went out from courtroom and called for ambulance. While a doctor was giving an injection to Zoya Gawdzei the judge broke into the room and again kept on shouting… The lawyer is in hospital now and didn't recover consciousness yet. It should be mentioned that T.Ruzhyk's demands were illegal. Special permission isn't required for tape-recording according to the law. It is required only in cases of video recording or making pictures in the courtrooms during a trial. It was not first time when judge T.Ruzhyk behaved so rudely. The alike case happened a couple of months ago when she declined participation of representatives of "Viasna" – A.Byalatski and V.Stefanovich – in capacity of public defenders of a chairman of the local organisation of the BPF "Adradzhennie". At that time a trial over Mr Sevyartsaw was held. And T.Ruzhyk behaved rudely and eccentrically too.

On 17 December, the headquarters of the Belarusan Helsinki Committee was robbed. Unknown people stole three computers: a computer with database of four years work period, a computer for publishing goals with lay-outs of two issues of the human rights bulleting "Arkush" and a computer of a secretary. The day before the robbery they cut off electricity in the location. All the requests of the BHC staff members to mend the electricity were declined in spite of the fact that the headquarters of the BHC is based in the building, which belongs to the presidential administration…

LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE "VIASNA" TO THOSE PARENTS WHOSE CHILDREN WERE LOST ON NYAMIGA

On 30 May, tragedy occurred on metro station Nyamiga. 53 young people who came to celebrate the second anniversary of the radio station "Mir" were lost in an unimaginable crush. Along with that holiday a tobacco company "Magna" was carrying out its "super marathon" – "Start Summer with Magna".

On 1 June, an independent Public Committee on investigation of the causes of the tragedy on the river Nyamiga was created. Lyavon Barshchewsky, acting chairman of the Belarusan Popular Front, and Vintsuk Vyachorka were the initiators of creation. The Committee made a statement that A.Lukashenka's regime is to blame for what had happened on 30 May on the river Nyamiga.

On 3 June, the Public Committee on investigation of the tragedy on the river Nyamiga offered to the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96" to become a working agency of it. "Viasna-96" addressed through independent press to all people-witnesses of this tragedy for help to investigation.

On 4 June, following the address of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96" to people-witnesses of the tragedy to give any information about it unknown people broke the telephone line of "Viasna-96". One day later they managed to find the disrepair and mend it.

On 5 August, the Minsk Maskowsky district court examined the civil case of 4 plaintiffs: Nina Inkova (mother of Masha Inkova born in 1983 and lost on May 30, 1999), Natallya Navakowskaya (mother of Alyawtsina Navakowskaya, born in 1983 and died on May 30, 1999), Volga Yantsova (mother of Alena Yantsova, born in 1983 and died on May 30, 1999) and Vyachaslava Chabanyana (on May 30 he suffered the cranial injury). The suit was brought against the City Executive Committee and the City Department of Internal Affairs. Radio company "Mir" (peace), Alivariya" and "Class-club Jazz-Craft" (representative of the latter hasn't shown up) were the third persons present. The lawyers of non-governmental organisation "Legal Assistance to the Population" were present as representatives of legal interests of the plaintiffs. Aleg Vouchak, former prosecutor's office detective, participant of the war in Afghanistan, represented Nina Inkova's interests. It was clear that the officials didn't want to take responsibility for their professional inefficiency. Radomsky, representative of the City Department of Internal Affairs applied that hearings on the civil case should be stopped because criminal

proceedings were instituted on the fact of the tragedy on May 30, 1999, the investigation is still going on and the court can't define each defendant's quit to compensate moral sufferings. The plaintiffs' representatives rejected the representative of the city Committee's application and declared that the court is entitled to listen to both sides, to witnesses, to clear out civil guilt and to demand compensation for moral sufferings. Judge Gusakowa stopped the hearings and went out to the advisor's room. The break was long. After the break, judge Gusakowa appeared and announced that at that moment it was impossible to estimate the guilt of the departments and that's why the examination of the civil case of the four plaintiffs will be stopped till the criminal case is over and till they get the results of it. The parents of lost children were indignant at the result of court sitting. They have witnessed once again that the authorities are playing for time in order to say at the end "no one is to blame!"

On 6 September, collegium of the Minsk City court left without changes the decision made by the Minsk Maskowski district court concerning the appeal of parents whose children were lost on metro station Nyamiga. The Republican prosecutor's office prolonged the term of investigation process.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE "VIASNA" TO PEOPLE SUSPECTED IN ATTEMPT UPON THE LIFE OF A.LUKASHENKA

On 21 April, a case of Yawgen Mikalutsky's assassination, who used to be a chairman of the State Control Committee of Magilew region, deputy of the National Assembly and a friend of A.Lukashenka, was tried in the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus. Yawgen Mikalutsky perished in the autumn of 1997. He died as a result of explosion of a radio-controlled explosive mechanism, which was mounted in the entrance of the house he lived in.

Three Magilew residents were suspected in committing this crime – Gawrylaw (24 years), Radzikowski (28) and Yanchewski (36). One of them was directly accused of assassination of Y.Mikalutsky. The rest were charged with preparing the attempt upon the A.Lukashenka's life. According to the investigation the accused were confiscated sub-machine-guns, hand-grenades and equipment for overhearing. The trial was closed behind doors. Even the representatives of the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus – Nadzeya Dudarava and Christopher Panico – were not allowed to take part in court hearings. An accused Radzikowski's appeal to be defended by public defendant from Belarusan Helsinki Committee was rejected.

On May 6, a press conference of the relatives of Raman Radzikouski, Victar Yancheuski and Anatol Gawrilaw was held at the headquarters of "Viasna-96".

The defendants' mothers reported that they had written a letter to the three presidents: Bill Clinton, Boris Yeltsin and Alexander Lukashenka. In this letter they (and they are Nina Zaidze, Tamara Yancheuskaya and Yaugenia Gaurilava) asked to make the trial open. The mothers asked to allow the press, the relatives and public representatives to the courtroom. "Our sons' lives and justice depend on it. We are frightened and we worry about their lives. Because one of the defendants has already died in prison" (Valeri Tkachow) Natallya Dzyazhurnaya, Raman Radzikouski's bride-to-be, and Lyudmila, Victar Yanchewski's wife, in their turn addressed their letters to International's organisations. They wrote: "The investigating authorities have failed to execute the president's order to find the murderer of Mikalutski. That is the reason of all the terrible falsification of facts, threats and pressure on our nearest. Behind the closed door of the court room they want to hide either the unsound charges or facts that can cast suspicious on the authorities".

On the press conference women told about the calamity that has happened to their families.

The former judge Yuri Sushkow who asked for political asylum in the West characterised Mikalutski's case in the following way: "Everybody remembers that Lukashenka was present at funeral and promised to find all the criminals and enemies in ten days. It's difficult to judge about the investigation process, its' objectivity. Nobody knows what real evidence they had. The one suspected (Valeri Tkachow) – hanged himself – a very mysterious death. This was a person who wasn't able to commit suicide… And what is the closed trial in our republic? It is the same as not to have it at all… Alexander Lukashenka himself was considered a victim in this case. There was a special resolution about this. The confession of one witness that the attempt on president's life was being prepared was enough to consider him a victim…"

The Human Rights Centre "Viasna" did its best to help the defendants and their relatives.

On 11 June, the three Magilew residents who were charged with assassination of Mikalutski and attempt upon the life of Lukashenka were brought court verdicts. Though V.Yanchewski pleaded not guilty the court had another opinion and sentenced him to 11 years of imprisonment in the strict regime colony. A.Gawrylaw will spend 5 years behind bars. R.Radzikowski was set free in the courtroom though he was found guilty for breaking the Article 213 of the Criminal Code and sentenced to 4 years of imprisonment... Such "uncertain" verdicts indirectly show hesitation and uncertainty of judges. So it is still not clear whether they committed the crime or not.

Raman Radzikowski together with his bride-to-be N.Dzyazhurnaya came to the office of the HRC "Viasna" to express their gratitude. Viktar Yanchewski's mother came with them along and said that she was convinced of his son not guilty and stated that the Judge obeyed an order from above.

By the way "customer's" name was never called during the trial. And what is more direct participation of the defendants in the assassination was not proved either. V.Yanchewski and A.Gawrylaw pleaded not guilty.

THERE IS NO INDEPENDENT JUDICIAL SYSTEM IN BELARUS

On February 18, the Judge of the Babruisk Leninski district Yury Uladzimiravich Sushkow, assigned by the presidential decree of 20.10.1997, asked for political asylum in Germany. Before that judge had made an unprecedented statement to get acquainted the public with the facts, which justify, the absence of independent judicial system in Belarus. Journalists met Yury Sushkow in Minsk in the headquarters of Human Rights Centre “Viasna-96”.

Yury Sushkow confirmed that he had lost hope to find any kind of justice in the Republic of Belarus because in the country, which is considered to be lawful, powers are not divided. One man, who breaks the whole system, has obtained the power. As a result of unskilful ruling of the country we observe economic, political and legal boundlessness in all spheres, structures and subdivisions of power, where alcoholism, protectionism and corruption flourish.

There is no power division in Belarus – this is the major conclusion, which judge Yury Sushkow makes. The judicial power is not independent. Yury Sushkow makes this conclusion from his own experience: “As a judge I can say that there is such an anti-human practice in our country when a man who is under investigation, and was taken in custody, cannot be justified and they find any guilty in order to limit oneself to the time a person has served.”

There was such an example when a young man was charged with premeditated murder. But in course of case it became clear that he committed a crime at the moment when a victim was beaten him with a knuckle-duster. In fact the defendant had numerous injuries and in this state he started with a knife and murdered a man. But as this man was behind bars, in the court they started thinking about charging him under the article on exceeding of the defence or murdering in the state of a strong moral excitement. Not just for imprisoning him for murder and for justifying his being in custody as well. That’s why there are no practically justifying verdicts in our country.

As for me, I have brought three verdicts of “not guilty” for a year of my work, and after those I haven’t been slang mud at.

Judge of the District court, Rygor Kachalaw, once told me that he could easily destroy me if I didn’t bring verdicts which are required by the present time. His question:

"Can you imagine the situation when your hands would be put under the knife?" I answered that a man in such a state could be made whatever you wanted.

This practice comes from Bolshevik times, when KGB enjoyed boundless power, when everybody was afraid of it. Judged submitted to the militia and KGB, brought the verdicts, which were necessary for them. People used to be arrested in order to conduct a future operative examination, by doing all the rights of legislation, of the Constitution and all the basic rights were violated.

Such an attitude towards people is possible only under the totalitarian regime.

As to obtaining evidence: when any case starts, a man may be simply "made" give it. A man may slander or say something, even those things he hasn't done.

It's known for sure that our intelligence service and the militia use different "old" means to disclose offence: hanging on bars in handcuffs, hitting tortures by hunger and night interrogations, threats of execution and putting on a gas mask without oxygen, pulling hair out in the area of genitals, burring of the skin.

Such techniques are applied everywhere because they are simple and cheap, and it's convenient for our country.

They often beat in such a way that there are no traces left! I contact with cops quite often, I used to work in the prosecutor's office as investigator and that's why I have a lot of acquaintances among cops. Investigators, as a rule, don't beat. Cops do. Their work is to force people to give evidence. In Babruisk there was a Valery Glushko, an investigator, he is a master of Sports and used to apply tortures. People lodged complaints to the prosecutor's office, and the prosecutor's office itself could do nothing. He used to hang on bars in handcuffs, beat with sticks, with hands – he used all the possible methods his primitive mind could make up. Now he works as a deputy chairman of Babruisk intelligence service.

The facts of absence of independent judicial system, cited by Yu. Sushkow, are stipulated by imperfect Belarusan legislation. Under the court law of 13.01.95 with the amendments of 1996 and 1998 years courts are made up in the republic of Belarus by voting or appointing judges. Judges of Minsk District, Minsk City, Minsk Region, Military Court, economic region and city court and Special courts are appointed by President of the republic of Belarus. Under illegal changes in the Constitution of 1996, the fact is that under The Soviet of the Republic's consent, the president appoints the judges of the Supreme Court, The High economic Court. The president has a right to appoint 6 judges of the Constitutional Court to discharge the chairman and judges of the Constitutional

Court and the chairman and judges of the Supreme Court, the chairman and judges of the High Economic court. The judges of the middle and low rank of the court system in the Republic of Belarus are discharged from their posts under the decision of the organ that appointed him on this post.

Yury Sushkow says, “Judges have privileges under the law of lawyers’ status – 20 years of experience in order to retire, inviolability (nobody has a right to arrest a judge and search him and that’s here where the problem arises), a district judge earns 10 ml Belarusan roubles what approximately 40$. That’s why judges are dependent on the executive authorities and intelligence services.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS DURING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS CAMPAIGN

Analysis of the process of the presidential elections scheduled on May 16, 1999 by the Supreme Soviet of the 13th Convocation shows that the Belarusan authorities actively used repressions in order to breakdown the elections. 2 300 members of the election commissions of deferent levels were interrogated .

On January 10, 1999 the Supreme Soviet of the 13th Convocation announced the date of presidential elections which were to be held on May 16, 1999. 44 deputies of the mentioned above Supreme Soviet voted for this decision. The sitting took place in the Minsk hotel "Tourist". The Prosecutor's Office in its turn passed a statement saying that the activities connected with organisation of early presidential elections don't correspond to the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus and to current legislation as well. "Such activities can be considered precisely as an attempt to make a coup d'etat, intention to provoke social destabilisation and as its result public disorder" is said in this statement. The statement's authors warned "organisation and participation in such illegal actions would result in criminal and administrative punishment" and called citizens "not to react to provocative statements of organisers of such actions, not to participate in these illegal actions". Official mass media, which are completely subdued to Alexander Lukashenka, didn't give any information about the decision of the Supreme Soviet or mocked at commenting on it. In February 1999 a secretary of the Central Election Commission Barys Gyunter said: "This year the Alexander Lukashenka's term of office is over. That's why the deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the 13th Convocation fulfilled their duty and scheduled presidential elections on 16 May. They also elected the Central Election Commission. If the authorities don't interfere in our activity we will carry out this elections according to the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus. The 5-ear term of Lukashenka's being President is over, that's why we have to conduct presidential elections in 1999. The results of 1996 referendum, by which Lukashenka prolonged term of his office, were accepted by the world public as having the character of recommendation. It was up to the Supreme Soviet of the 13th Convocation to take them into account and make decisions. But the results of the referendum were forcibly put in force and given status of law by the President what is illegal by itself".

The Article 81 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus and Article 1 of the Law on the Presidential Elections of the Republic of Belarus unequivocally say that President of the Republic of Belarus is elected for 5 years term.

During the election campaign several thousands of people engaged in that way or another suffered from activities of the Belarusan authorities. More than 100 members of Commissions on Presidential Elections were detained, 20 people were sentenced to different terms of the administrative arrest. The repressions were mainly used against organisers of the elections.

a) Persecution of Mikhail Chyhir – a candidate for the presidential office

On March 30, 15 unknown persons in civil clothes tried to burst into Mikhail Chyhir’s pre-election headquarters. They said that they had come there to give Chyhir a subpoena to visit a militia department. According to witnesses these people arrived at the place where the headquarters was situated and watched it for some time. After Mikhail Chyhir had come to the office they rang the doorbell and ordered to open the door. They refused to show any documents and used bluster. They tore off the telephone wires. In spite of this activists of the election campaign managed to phone journalists using their mobile telephones. When the journalists arrived the "unknown men in civil clothes" disappeared. In some time Mikhail Chyhir and his assistants left the headquarters. At 13.00 Chyhir’s car was stopped in the suburb Uruchcha and Chyhir was detained together with his assistant colonel Uladzimir Baradach. Then they were brought to the Investigative Administration of the Republic of Belarus. At 17.00 M.Chyhir gave witness on the case which was brought in connection with credits given by "Agraprambank" at the beginning of 1990s. Approximately at 19.00 Uladzimir Baradach was released. Mikhail Chyhir was taken to the isolation ward of the Minsk City Executive Committee. First he was detained for 3 days according to Article 119 of the Criminal Code (arrest of a person suspected in committing a crime) for giving witness on the case which had been instituted for breaking the Article 91 (large scale embezzlement, power abuse and so on). Then the term of detention was prolonged up to ten days. On April 8, a 10-day detention of ex-Prime Minister of Belarus was over. Any further detention of M.Chyhir and keeping him in custody without charging him would be unlawful. However, in the early morning on 8 April the Investigation Committee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs brought the official charge against M.Chyhir. He was incriminated with breach of Article 91 (p.4) (large-scale embezzlement) and Article 166 (abuse of authority). By way of evidence of such "theft" was 1 million USD transferred into the bank account of one Canadian building firm as the deposit for building an office of "Belagraprambank".

By acting in such a way the Belarusan authorities broke the Article 23 of the Law on the Presidential Elections of the Republic of Belarus, which says, "A candidate on the Presidential post can’t undergo criminal punishment, be arrested, detained or undergo

other kinds of administrative punishment upon court's decision without an agreement of the Central Election Commission."

On 7 April, the wife of Mikhail Chyhir submitted a statement to the General Prosecutor of the Republic of Belarus. In that statement Yuliya Chyhir denied the information spread in the official press that her husband was involved in theft of 1 million USD. On April 8 court hearings in the Central district court took place in Minsk. Pavel Karshunovich, deputy chairman of the court, examined M.Chyhir's appeal regarding measures of his detention and ruled out that they would remain the same. M.Chyhir's wife - Yuliya Chyhir (a lawyer by profession) defended her husband in court on her own. A complaint was lodged saying that detention and keeping in custody is only used in cases with dangerous criminals jeopardising the people lives. The court rejected M.Chyhir's appeal and his wife's complaint. The Prosecutor's Office sanctioned his arrest for another 3 months. Thus, M.Chyhir saw presidential elections being behind bars.

At night on May 25-26 unknown persons wearing masks robbed Mikhail Chyhir's pre-election headquarters.

In April the deputy Prosecutor of the city of Gomel Valery Furs brought the criminal case against the ex-Minister of Internal Affairs Yury Zakharanka, co-ordinator of the election campaign in the Mikhail Chyhir's head-quarters in Gomel region, for breaking the Article 188 (p.2) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus. According to this Article one can be sentenced up to one year of imprisonment and corrective-works or can be fined. The republican search was announced. Zakharanka didn't know anything about the criminal case instituted against him and was not summoned to the Prosecutor's office.

On May 8, Volha Barysawna Zakharanka applied to the militia with request to find her husband Yury Zakharanka, who disappeared under mysterious circumstances... There's a view that Yury Zakharanka was dismissed because of his refusal to fight against the opposition using all possible means regardless of the Constitution and the law, what was expected from him by authorities.

b) Persecution of the Central Election Commission

In February, Viktar Ganchar, the State Committee for Security (KGB) officially warned chairman of the Central Election Commission on presidential elections. The warning said: "the activity run by Ganchar and the Central Election Commission's members contradicts the current legislation, it does provoke destabilisation of political situation in the Republic of Belarus and might lead to treason according to the art. 61 (p.1) of the Criminal Code. In connection with this V.Ganchar is passed an official warning

and explained that the activity of such kind might lead to offence and entail criminal responsibility".

On February 11, immediately after working meeting of representatives of local commissions on presidential elections with the chairman of the Central Election Commission Viktar Ganchar two participants of the meeting mentioned above were detained. They were Uladzimir Shytsikaw and Alexander Zaranok. The detention was carried out by a big group of policemen under the guidance of Oblast Department Deputy Head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Salawiow. The detainees were seized 760 placards with information about coming presidential elections. The policemen drew up a report and released them. In some days the 60 year old Alexander Zaranok, a resident of Kalinkavichy was brought a verdict: “three days of administrative detention” by the Gomel Central district court. On February 20 A.Zaranok was released. He called the conditions of his detention to be “brutish”.

On February 22, in Gomel three men were brought administrative verdicts. The court trials were conducted in the Gomel Central district Court. Uladzimir Shytsikaw, a member of the Belarusan Popular Front “Adradzhiennie”, who was detained immediately after the working meeting with V.Ganchar on February 11, was sentenced to three days of administrative detention. Ruslan Bialanaw and Pavel Klimovich, the activists of the Student Trade-union, were brought the same verdicts. They were detained and given sub-poenas by patrol on February 19 for walking down the Savetskaia street with flags of the Independent Trade union.

c) Persecutions of members of the Central Election Commission

On February 25, the members of the Central Commission on presidential elections were detained by the law enforcement agencies in Minsk. The detention took place in the morning during the meeting approving lists for regional commissions, which was organised by the "underground" Central Election Commission in the cafe "Coliseum" located in the Officers’ Palace near the Kastrychnitskaia underground station. The formal ground for detention was the conducting of an unauthorised meeting, which entails criminal responsibility according to the art.167 (p.1) of the Administrative Code. All the detained were brought to the Minsk Leninski Department of Internal Affairs. Among them were Viktar Ganchar, Barys Gyunter, secretary of the CEC, and the rest members of the CEC. In the second half of the day the court trials of the detained members of the CEC were conducted in the Department of Internal Affairs not in the court. The members of the Central Election Commission called for barristers and that’s why the trials were postponed on March 1.

On March 1, the trials over members of the Central Election Commission were held. Court hearings were conducted in the building of the Leninski District Department of Internal Affairs. Genadz Samoilenka was the first, who came to the “court” in the morning. He was fined 30 million roubles (100 USD). Five more members of the Central Election Commission were charged with breaking the art. 167 (p.1) of the Administrative Code (failure to comply with order of conducting meetings, marches, rallies and pickets). The judge Valiantsina Ziankevich brought the following verdicts: Sidarenka Valery Ivanavich (a worker) –20 million roubles fine; Klianovaia Valiantsina Vitalewna (a mother of 16 children, 6 of them are minors) – warning; Zakurdaiew Leanid Ryhoravich (born in 1926, a veteran of the 2 World War, pensioner, physically handicapped) – 20 million roubles fine; Gurynovich Anatol Vasilievich – 5 days of imprisonment. Lagun Valiantsina Viktarawna (a staff member of the National Academy of Sciences) – warning. A little bit later in the Minsk Leninski District Court other members of the Commission were charged. This time public representatives were allowed to come in. The beginning of the process was even taken a film by Russian TV-broadcasting companies. But then the journalists were asked by Alena Tsierashkova to leave the court room. She passed the following verdicts: Abadowski Siargei Viktaravich (a legal adviser of the Belarusan Independent Trade-union) – 5 days of administrative arrest (S.Abadowski refused to reply to the judge’ questions and give any explanations in token of protest against illegal detention and bringing him to the book. After judge announced court’s decision he went on hunger-strike); Navumchyk Iosif Adamavich (Vitsebsk) – 15 million roubles fine; Sazanavets Liliya Vatslavawna (mother of two underage children, Lida) – warning; Pakhabaw Mikalai Andreiavich (worker, Barysaw) – 30 million roubles fine; Dzilinchus Alginas Yuzefavich (film director) – 30 million roubles fine; Koktysh Alexander (journalist) – 30 million roubles fine; Gyunter Barys Davydavich (secretary of the Central Commission on Presidential Elections) – 5 days of administrative arrest. None of the accused people pleaded guilty. All of them stated that they executed decision of the legitimate Supreme Soviet of the 13th Convocation and that their activity was directed both by the Law on Presidential Elections of the Republic of Belarus (adopted in 1994), which is still actual without any amendments, and by the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus adopted in 1994.

Thus the right to peaceful assembly provided by the Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was abused.

d) Arrest of the chairman of the CEC Viktar Ganchar

On March 1, Viktar Ganchar was arrested in Kisyaliow St. in Minsk. He was forced out of his car by police and brought to the Leninski District Court, where he was

sentenced to 10 days of imprisonment for heading the Commission. During the trial of him the principal of open public consideration of administrative cases in court and the right to be defended were violated. On March 1, Viktar Ganchar went on hunger strike. On March 3, his wife Zinaida Ganchar was allowed to meet her husband tete-a-tete, which lasted just some minutes. Chairman of the Central Election Commission said that he was going to be on hunger strike until all the members of the Commission would have been kept in jails. Emergency ambulances "kept vigil" near the preliminary ward. Apart from this the officials of the special services had an eye on security guards responsible for safe-keeping of prisoners not let them to be in touch with journalists and public.

On March 5, Viktar Ganchar was enforced by doctors to stop hunger strike (they began a forcible feeding of him). Anatol Gurynovich, member of the Central Election Commission who served his term in the neighbouring cell, heard Viktar Ganchar putting up resistance to doctors. Ganchar's principal condition – immediate release of all accused members of the Central Election Commission – was not fulfilled. Viktar Ganchar said about his hunger-strike: "There were no alternatives and maybe by this fact I can explain why I didn't suffer much during all these 10 days and this decision was rather simple. I was ready long ago before it. Unfortunately only my strong body wasn't completely ready, that's why on the 4th – 5th day my will power was becoming stronger and stronger. The organism started to fail me – I mean those the most hard days when I was suffering from spasm and unfortunately I had pangs one after another. Nevertheless even in this critical situation I had no choice. I refused so-called forced medical aid offered by doctors from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It was absolutely unacceptable... In reality the decisions were made at level of Lukashenka and Sheiman. As a result of it – inadequate or even belated actions. For example, two days were necessary to make the inadequate decision: to put an end to the hunger strike by force, with the assistance of special troops in black masks. In this connection I think that the people who were making such decisions were overwhelmed by fear and panic… Of course, it's unbelievable that they were worried about my state of health. They were afraid that there would be an information drain, a terrible scandal – which could inevitably lead to a crash of that extraordinary power".

On March 11, a term of administrative arrest of Viktar Ganchar finished. Chairman of the legal Central Election Commission was to have been discharged from the special militia department at 2 p.m. At those time representatives of mass media, publicity, members of the Central Committee on Presidential Elections, activists of democratic parties gathered near custody centre. Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Syamion Sharetsky was also present. But they could not manage to meet Ganchar. It turned out

that in the morning he was taken to another isolator where he was interrogated by an investigator. After this Viktar Ganchar was taken to Lagoysk Avenue by a car and thrown out of it. Viktar Ganchar, suffering from exhaustion, had to get home on his own. We found out that during his being in the special militia department in Akrestsin Street Ganchar was tortured. He was chained to a radiator by handcuffs and beaten by people with black masks on their faces. They also twisted his arms and legs back – made him a "swallow" as it is usually called. After tortures and dry hunger strike Viktar Ganchar was in rather bad health. At night on March 12 his wife had to call the ambulance.

Usage of tortures as well as other kinds of cruel and inhuman treatment and punishments is nothing but violation of international norms in particular: Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 10 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Convention Against Tortures (1984) and others.

On March 3, Syarhei Abadowski, a member of the Central Election Commission was sentenced to administrative arrest and was brought to the emergency hospital with diagnosis “high blood-pressure”. It was a consequence of a hunger strike, declared by Abadowski during the trial, against illegal detention. In the hospital S.Abadowski was given an emergency medical help and released. He was left two and a half days to be in custody, which he had to serve after his recovery.

e) Case of Yawhen Murashka

On February 12, in Gomel the policemen guided by the colonel Salawiow, head of Gomel Region’s Department of the Administration of Internal Affairs, and lieutenant-colonel Smolikaw, head of the Central District Department of Internal Affairs, without search-warrant searched the office of Belarusan Helsinki Committee. They confiscated 14.000 copies of placards advertising presidential elections scheduled on May 16. The chairman of the Belarusan Helsinki Committee’s Gomel branch Y.Murashka, resident of Magileu city, A.Fiodaraw and unemployed L.Udovenka were present while policemen were searching the office. As it turned out later they were looking for a "bomb". Murashka, Fiodaraw and Udovenka were taken written explanations of the placards’ origin. The victims lodged a complaint about policemen activities to the to the prosecutor’s office of the Gomel Central district.

On May 9, chairman of the Regional Election Commission Murashka was detained in the town of Kalinkavichy (Gomel region). Policemen searched his car over. As a result they confiscated voting bulletins and other documents connected with the elections (papers of the Gomel Regional Election Commission and Zhytkavichy, Kalinkavichy,

Petrykaw, Elsk, Narawliany, Rechytsa, Khoiniki Districts Commissions). On the trial, conducted on May 10, Murashka was sentenced to 10 days of administrative arrest.

A criminal case for breaking the Article 186 (p.3) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (organisation or active participation in the activities aimed at breaking public order) was brought against Murashka for organisation of meeting with the chairman of the Central Commission on the presidential elections. In compliance with this Article one can be sentenced up to 3 years of imprisonment.

f) Summons of members of election commissions to the Prosecutors' Offices, Departments of Internal Affairs and intimidations for their attempt "to seize power"

Viktar Navasad is reporting, "Yet in the beginning of the March 1999 members of the Svislach District Commission on presidential elections were suited one after another to the district Prosecutor's office. All of them were officially warned. When I asked prosecutor's assistant who "was receiving" us he reported that papers about it came from Minsk.

All in all there were 10 members in our Commission. After the threatening campaign only 8 members were left. To draw new members to the work in commission is very hard task. All people are afraid of repressions, they are afraid to lose their working place. The chairman of the Svislach District Commission is Viktar Tryshchanovich. The chairman of the Svislach District executive Committee Anatol Kuzma invited Viktar Tryshchanovich to his study. There were heads of the local KGB and militia. After groundless accusations A.Kuzma offered V.Tryshchanovich to leave the Svislach district and not to interfere to the district's social life. Besides he also added that he would do everything possible "to bite trough the Commission members' throats…

A.Kuzma invited also for a talk deputy chairman of the Commission Anatol Valyuk. After that A.Valyuk "was invited" by the investigator Kalach of the District Administration of Internal Affairs. The investigator was curious about Commission activities, who finances the elections, where the papers of the Commission sittings are kept and so on. Director of studies of the secondary school №3 warned the secretary of the Commission Genadz Radetski on behalf of the director and said that they were going to dismiss him in case he would keep on his activity in Commission on presidential elections. Iosif Dmukhowski's father was ordered by A.Kuzma to influence his son, because the latter was an active member of the Commission or otherwise he would lay Iosif Dmukhowski off…

There are a lot of alike cases. Such a pressure is very serious one especially in the province where a head of the presidential “vertical” is the only person who decides about everything.

On March 11, Kanstantsin Viartseika, member of the Peasant Party and representative of the initiative group on Mikhail Chyhir’s nomination for the presidential office, was detained by policemen in the town of Belaaziorsk (Biaroza district, Brest Region). He was detained while collecting the signatures for Mikhail Chyhir and then brought to the Prosecutor’s Office, where he was warned by Prosecutor Kurylevich.

On March 12, the Prosecutor of the Homel Central district Yemel’yanenka warned Viktar Artsyukh for taking part in the sitting of the local branch of the Independent trade union, where the question of membership in the District Commission on Presidential Elections was considered.

On March 12, I.Smagin, H.Zhuk, M.Aksionaw and A.Katsapava, the members of the Gomel Commission on Presidential Elections, were summoned to the prosecutor’s office “to give explanations”.

On March 13, a picket was held in Navapolatsk devoted to the Constitution’s Day. It was organised by representatives of the local council of the BPF "Adradzhennie". People held placards saying “We have the right to elections!”, “Belarus is a free country!”, “16 May is the day of presidential elections.”

On March 15, Mikalay Sulima, chairman of the local board of the BPF "Adradzhennie", was detained while collecting the signatures in Belaaziorsk (Brest region). He was warned by the Prosecutor’s Office.

On March 14, member of the BPF "Adradzhennie" Yury Pchelnikaw was detained at 18 o’clock in Nepakoranyia Avenue in Magileu. He was searched and then brought to the Mahileu Kastrychnitsky district’s Department of Internal Affairs to find out his personality, where he had been kept for 3 hours. He was confiscated printed documents, among them were papers with signatures for Zyanon Paznyak, fly-sheets, saying “Paznyak paves the way for Belarus to Europe”, fly-sheets with information about the Belarusan People’s Republic. Yury Pchelnikaw refused to sign the report drawn up by the policemen. He has been accused for breaking the article 172 (p.3) of the Administrative Code (distribution of printed editions which were published with breaking the established order and without imprinted data, containing the information aimed at doing harm to public order, to the rights and legal interests of citizens).

On March 15, Zmitser Salawiow and Aleg Pashkevich were detained in Navapolatsk at 9 o'clock p.m. The formal ground for detention was that they were collecting the signatures for Zyanon Paznyak. Policemen demanded that they should put down the explanation about their activities. In response to the question asked by Z.Salawiow and A.Pashkevich why they were detained policemen told that they looked like robbers wanted by police...

On March 15, the members of the local Commission on Presidential Elections were summoned to the Prosecutor's Office in Baranavichy (Brest region). Balyaslaw Bolbat, a member of the Belarusan Social-Democratic Party "Narodnaya Gramada", the members of the Belarusan Popular Front "Adradzhennie" Uladzimir Gowsha, Georgii Zagorski, Tamara Zverava, Mikhas Barysevich and chairman of the local board of the BPF "Adradzhennie" Mikalai Severtsaw were among detained people. Deputy Prosecutor Kvashnin warned them and told that in case they had carried on their activities in the commission on presidential elections they would have been brought to book.

On March 15, A.Prasniakow, Deputy Prosecutor of Savetsky district of Gomel, officially warned Anatol Paplawski, active member of the BPF and the Central City Commission on Presidential Elections. Prasniakow warned Anatol Paplawski that in case he had continued his activities he would have been brought to book.

On March 15, Mikola Klimovich, member of the BPF, was summoned to the prosecutor's office of the Kastrychnitski district of Minsk. Prosecutor Zhukavets led a discussion with M.Klimovich about the activities of the District Commission on Presidential Elections.

On March 16, Uladzimir Pleshchanka, a member of the Vitsebsk council of the BPF "Vybar" (Choice) and well known opposition activist, was tried in court in Vitsebsk. He was accused of being involved in the case of disappearance of the bust to the Russian commander Suvorov. Pleshchanka was charged with breaking Article 201 (p.1) and Article 225 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (intentional hooliganism and destruction of historical and cultural monuments). The public of the city showed interest in the case. There were no free sits in the courtroom. Nadzeia Dudarava, observer of the OSCE in Belarus and the representatives of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96" Ales Byalatski and Valiantsin Stefanovich in capacity of public defenders were present at the trial. It should be mentioned that 50-year old U. Pleshchanka has already been kept in custody for seven months. The state of his health has considerably worsened for this period. During his speech U.Pleshchanka stated that he was not being accused of hooliganism but of his political view points and public activities. It became clear during

the court sitting that there was no accusatory resolution in the court. To be exact U.Pleshchanka had only the first page of this document in triplicate. So the judge was forced to stop the court sitting and put off the trial on March 26. The barrister and public defenders insisted on immediate making Pleshchanka free on his own recognisance to remain within the confines of the city, but in vain.

On March 11, Zmitser Abramovich, representative of the Belarusan Social-Democratic Party, member of the initiative group on Mikhail Chyhir's nomination for Presidential office, was detained and then brought to the local Administration of Internal Affairs in Barysaw (Minsk Region). Militiamen drew up a report saying that Z.Abramovich broke the Article 167 (p.3) (breach of the law on elections) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus. Next day he was detained again by policemen while collecting the signatures for M.Chyhir. But this time policemen decided not to draw up a new report. On March 17 Z.Abramovich was again detained but this time by the officials of the Committee on State Security (KGB). Chairman of the Barysaw department of the Administration of the Committee on State Security for Minsk and Minsk region S.M.Litsvinchyk officially warned Z.Abramovich "for the activities which might cause amenability provided by Article 61 (p.1) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (a plot aimed at seizure of power by unconstitutional means)". The aforesaid Article provides amenability up to 12-year term of imprisonment with property confiscation or without it. In spite of intimidations Zmitser that same day went on collecting the signatures.

On March 17, Ales Pikula, chairman of the local council of the Malady Front, was detained by unknown people wearing civil clothes in Baranavichy at 17.00 p.m. while collecting the signatures for Zyanon Paznyak. The unknown people did not introduce themselves that is why Ales Pikula put up resistance. They beaten him severely and dragged him by force to the car, where he was threatened and led a discussion about his political activities. Having driven him round the town they released him without drawing up a report. Ales Pikula appealed with complaint to the local Prosecutor's Office. On March 25 he got a response by Chairman of the Baranavichy Department of Internal Affairs lieutenant-colonel S.Mostyk (a copy of this document was submitted to the Prosecutor of the town) saying: "The appeal lodged by Mr. A.Pikula to institute a criminal case can not be satisfied in compliance with the Article 5 (p.2) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (a lack of corpus delicti). The search of people who have beaten you on March 17 goes on. In case you don't agree with this decision you can appeal against it in the Prosecutor's Office of the town of Baranavichy".

On March 18, at Magileu's Central District Court the under aged member of the "Young Front" Ales Pawtaratsky stood the trial. The day before he had been detained while collecting the signatures for Zyanon Paznyak nomination for Presidential office. The judge Saroka fined him for 250 000 roubles according to article 167 (p.3) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus. The judge refused to allow Valadar Tsurupanaw to be a public defender on the trial. It seems very strange that Ales Pawtaratsky stood the trial in court. According to the Article 167 (p.3) and Article 201 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus the cases of such kind are to be considered by regional committees on the cases of under aged persons.

On March 18, the Aleinikaw family was summoned to the Prosecutor's Office in Dzyatlava (Grodna region). Vasil Aleinikaw, Chairman of the local council of the BPF "Adradzhennie", his wife Antanina Aleinikava, Chairman of the local Commission on Presidential Elections, and Uladzimir Rudzew, Secretary of that very Commission were detained. They were officially warned.

On March 18, in the town of Mar'ina Gorka (Pukhavichy district, Minsk region) at about 19 o'clock p.m. the flat, where the local commission on presidential elections is based, was searched. The search was conducted by policemen with captain L.D.Nechuivitser at the head without search warrant. They confiscated printed production and personal belongings (two white-red-white flags).

On March 18, Uladzimir Shytsikaw, a member of the local Commission on Presidential Elections, was summoned to the Prosecutor's Office of the Gomel region. It was said in the writ that he was to give "explanations" to prosecutor Khizhanok. The "explanations" of this kind was to give V.Starchanka, who was given sub-poena on March 31. V.Dambrowsky and A.Dawhala, members of the local commissions on presidential elections were also called to the prosecutor's office.

On March 19, in Mariina Gorka (Minsk region) at about 21 p.m. U.Zhawniak was detained while collecting the signatures by policemen and brought to the Town Administration of Internal Affairs.

On March 19, Viktar Belaskow, an inhabitant of Minsk, was detained in the town of Gorky (Magileu Region) while collecting the signatures for Zyanon Paznyak's nomination for Presidential office. The policemen brought him to the local Administration of Internal Affairs. According to Belaskow in the Administration of Internal Affairs the policemen drew up a report of detention and that one of confiscation of 5 subscription sheets and 62 copies of fly-sheets with information about forthcoming presidential elections. After

this Viktar Belaskow was brought to the flat, where his mother lived. The flat was searched, some fly-sheets an subscription sheets were confiscated. Then he was brought to the Regional Prosecutor's Office, where he was interrogated by the regional Prosecutor in the presence Chairmen of local police and local department of Committee on State Security. At the end Viktar Belaskow was warned by the Prosecutor, who told that "in case he had carried on his activities he would have been brought to book according to the article 61 (p.1) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (plot aimed at illegal seizure of power)". But Belaskow was not given any official papers.

On March 19, at 9.45 a.m., Genrykh Zasimovich, an activist of the BPF "Adradzhennie", who lives in the village Seliavichy (Slonim district, Grodna Region), was "paid a visit" by policemen from the town of Slonim. He collected the signatures for Zyanon Paznyak in his village. The policemen were wondered why he did it.

G.Zasimovich was warned and promised "in case you don't come to your sense you will deal with the Committee on State Security (KGB) ". This visit was aimed at intimidating not only G.Zasimovich but all the villagers as well. And it was effective. After this visit many people were afraid of putting their signatures for Zyanon Paznyak.

On March 19, the pensioners I. Pyachkova and M. Galawniow were detained while collecting the signatures for Z.Paznyak in the Nadzezhdzinskaia Street in Minsk. They were brought to the Leninski district Administration of Internal Affairs, where they spent three hours. According to them they were forced to put down the explanations of their activities and then were drawn up a report of subscription sheets' confiscation.

On March 19, Yawgen Labanovich and Alexander Yuryn were detained in Minsk while collecting the signatures for Mikhail Chyhir's nomination for the presidential office during the official picket organised by the Belarusan Independent Trade union. Mrs. Karaliova was detained for the same reason at another picket of the Belarusan Independent Trade union, which was held in Zhylunovich street. All the detained people were driven to the district Departments of Internal Affairs to draw up reports.

On March 21, Uladzimir Plyachko, who collected the signatures for Zyanon Paznyak in Brest, at about 23.00 p.m. was attacked by a man in camouflage uniform. It happened while U.Pliachko was going along the Kryvashein street near house No. 13. An unknown man snatched out a subscription sheet, tore it and hit the elderly man in the face... Mr. Plyachko also asserts, that he was dismissed from his job exactly because of the membership of the BPF.

On March 21, militiamen came to the flat of M.I.Dowbik, chairman of the Regional Commission on Presidential Elections in Klichaw (Magilew region). They offered him to come with them for enlightening of some questions. In some time a militiaman came into the flat and told Dowbik's wife to give him her husband's passport. The militiaman informed her that Dowbik was accused in infringing of the Administrative Code. But Dowbik's wife didn't know where and for what "infringement" her husband was kept. Only on Monday 22 she found out that her husband had been sentenced to 15 days of administrative arrest for a small disorderly conduct (for "using foul language in presence of a militiaman").

On March 22, the member of the BPF "Adradzhennie" Mikola Labanaw was detained by policemen while collecting the signatures for Zyanon Paznyak in Magilew in Astrowski Street. He was brought to Magilewu Kastrychnitski District Department of Internal Affairs, where he was kept until midnight. The policemen refused to inform his relatives about his arrest. Various papers and documents, including papers with signatures, flysheets saying “Paznyak is paving the way to Europe” and those containing the information about the Belarusan People's Republic were taken away from Mikola Labanaw. He refused to sign the report accusing him of breaking the article 173 (p.3) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus.

On March 22, chairman of the Mstsislaw District Commission on Presidential Elections Ivan Kazarez was called to the Prosecutor's Office, where he was warned for taking part in the work of the aforesaid commission. He was also warned about criminal responsibility (up to 12 years of imprisonment) stipulated by the article 61 (p.1) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus.

On March 22, Vasil Alshewski, member of the Klichaw District Commission on Presidential Elections, was sentenced to 15 days in detention. He was brought to the local Department of Internal Affairs for investigation. Then report about his detention was drawn up and he was brought to court.

On March 23, members of Klimavichy (town situated in Magileu Region) Commission on Presidential Elections were summoned to the Prosecutor's Office. Prosecutor A. Katliar warned them.

On March 23, the inhabitant of the Biaroza town (Brest region) Tatsiana Mikhailawna Alikhver, a pensioner and a member of the District Commission on Presidential Elections, who works under the contract in the social sphere, received a

warning: if she did not leave her activities in the District Commission on Presidential Elections she would be dismissed.

On March 23, A. Shaternik, member of the Union of Artists and member of Minsk Central District Commission on Presidential Elections, was called to the District Administration of the Committee on State Security for Minsk and Minsk region, where he was warned by lieutenant H.I. Tartakowski. He was told about an inadmissibility of the illegal actions and was clarified, that the similar acts from his party in future, in case he did not make proper conclusions, it could result in bringing a criminal action against him and entail the criminal responsibility.

On March 24,Yuras Palchewski, member of the BPF and a member of the district commission on presidential elections, was called to the prosecutor’s office of the Minsk Kastrychnitski district of. The prosecutor insisted on bringing him to administrative amenability in compliance with the article 167 (p.3) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus. At the “lecture” there was colonel of the Committee on State Security present, who was interested in a problem of financing of the election commission. The prosecutor warned Y.Palchewski about possible bringing him to book.

On March 24, all the members of the Minsk Leninski district commission on presidential elections with A.Zhawner at head were called to the deputy prosecutor of the Leninski district S.S.Sokal. Seven out of twelve members of the aforesaid commission were drawn up reports for “illegal actions”.

On March 25, chairman of the BSDP "Narodnaia Gramada" Ales Serdziukow was detained by police officials in civil clothes in Magileu at the coach station at 6.00 a.m. He was brought to the Leninski district Administration of Internal Affairs for examination, where he was kept till 11.00 a.m. The policemen referred to the information they got about the heroin containing in the Serdziukow’s bag while trying to explain the reason of his detention. But during the examination they found only subscription sheets with 1000 signatures for Mikhail Chyhir, which were confiscated. The notebook of the detained man and his personal writing downs were confiscated as well. A.Serdziukow refused to sign the report drawn up by policemen, which accused him of breaking Article № 167 (p.3) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus.

On March 25, members of the Brest District Commission on Presidential Elections N.Ahanesian, U. Vyalichkin, M. Lukashuk and R. Pron’ka were "invited" to the Prosecutor’s Office of the Leninski district of Brest, where they were led a discussion by Prosecutor V.K. Masiuk. As it turned out, the Brest Town Executive Committee having received the lists of members of Commissions on Presidential Elections, has transmitted

them to the Prosecutor's Office. And for this reason some Commissions have found in their mailboxes the subpoenas.

On 25 March, Mikola Yermalaew and Victar Stukaw, members of the Polatsk District Commission on Presidential Election were summoned to the Polatsk city prosecutor's office and warned for administrative liability stipulated by the article 167.3 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus (violation of the law on elections).

On March 25, Mikhail Bautovich, member of the Polatsk District Commission on the Presidential Elections was summoned to the Polatsk City Prosecutor's Office, where he was officially warned by inspector A. Ausyuk for taking part in the Commission’s activities.

On March 25, Ivan Yanukovich received summons to appear in the Polatsk District Prosecutor's office. Being a deputy of the Polatsk District Commission on the Presidential Elections, he was given a written warning about administrative liability stipulated by the article №167.3 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus (violation of the law on elections) signed by public Prosecutor of Polatsk District, senior counsellor of Justice N.M.Nikulenka.

On March 25, Zmitser Salawiow, activist of the initiative group on “Viasna-96” press-centre foundation in Navapolatsk and a post-graduate student, was called to rector of the Polatsk State University where he was warned about expulsion from the university in case he would continue his political activity and to taking part in the Presidential election campaign.

On March 25, M.Ustsinenka, member of the Pukhavichy District Commission on Presidential Elections was called to the local Administration of Committee for State Security in Mar’ina Gorka. Lieutenant-colonel V.P.Rypick warned him saying “your activity contradicts current legislation and might lead to the amenability provided by Article 61 (p.1) (plot aimed at seizure of power using unconstitutional means), which is under the KGB’s control”. M.Ustsinenka refused to sign up the report of his official warning.

On March 25, divisional inspector I.D.Gryshchanka of the Minsk Pershamaiski district in the presence of the witnesses drew up a report of confiscation of subscription sheets from Mrs. Nina Fiodarawna Kaliada, born in 1930.

On March 25, Larysa Viktarawna Liaparskaia was called to the Prosecutor’s Office of the Minsk Savetski district. Mrs. H.A.Gryn, Prosecutor’s assistant, and one more man, who didn’t introduce himself, interrogated the woman. They wanted to know how she

got into the Commission, what she did there and how much she earned. After interrogation Larysa Viktarawna was offered to read the article No. 167 (p.3) of the Code of Administrative Offences of the Republic of Belarus and not to break it. She was proposed to put down it into the examination report and to sign it. In such a way the talks with Ryhor Ivanovich and Alexander Makaw were conducted, who were called the same day to the Prosecutor's Office.

On March 27, members of district commissions on Presidential Elections were attacked at about 14.00 in Magilew. It happened during the working meeting of chairman of Magilew Regional Commission on Presidential Elections U.V.Sharapaw with representatives of the Magilewlocal district commissions, which was held in a private flat. The house was surrounded by policemen and then people in civilian clothes together with policemen (in all 15 men) burst into the flat. Chairman of the Criminal Investigation Department of the Magilew Regional Administration of Internal Affairs lieutenant colonel Karpaw and investigator lieutenant Senakosaw were at the head of the group. They searched the flat and carried an examination of all those present without any explanation and without showing corresponding documents and what is more without search warrant. During the search, which lasted 5 hours, owners of the flat were not allowed to use a telephone. Everything that happened in the flat was filmed. The militiamen confiscated copies of the subscription sheets (in all 258 copies), one copy of the Law on Presidential Elections and some other documents of the local Commissions on Presidential Elections as well as their seals and identity cards of those present. Witnesses were invited just to sign the confiscation report.

Lines, taken from a letter: "My name is Syarzhuk Ivannikaw. I am 26. I am doing my fourth year at the Journalists' Faculty of the Belarusan State University by correspondence. I am also a member of Barysaw based Commission on Presidential Elections. On March 29, 1999 the divisional inspector Genadz Nestsiarovich brought me a subpoena saying that I had to visit Barysaw City Department of Internal Affairs on March 31, in particular the room № 35 of the colonel Fiodar Padabed, deputy head of the Department. I was summoned there for being a member of the Commission on presidential elections. But I didn't visit the Department of Internal Affairs, because I consider this action of militia an unreasonable one. I act in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus adopted in 1994".

In the subpoena, which was received by the participant of the election campaign, citizen of Zhodzina A. Karaliow, the consequences of not visiting police department were described: "Malignant evasion of a witness or a victim from visiting the Investigative Structures will entail administrative influence upon Article 166. (p.2) of the

Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus”. On March 30, Alexander Kaputski was called to the local Administration of Committee on State Security in Maladzechna for "making up illegal Commissions on Presidential Elections in the town of Maladzechna and in its district". He had a "talk" with B.P.Gladki, assistant of Chairman of the body mentioned above. Kaputski was officially warned, "activities of this kind from his party in the future...will entail criminal responsibility".

On March 29, all members of the Masty District Commission on Presidential Elections were summoned to the Masty Prosecutor's Office (Grodna region). They were asked to give explanations concerning their activity and warned afterwards.

On March 29, Polatsk District Prosecutor's Office gave a warning to Andrei Savastsionak, member of a local Commission on Presidential Elections. In his appeal to the press centre of “Viasna-96” A.Savastsionak said: “I would like to draw your attention to the fact that there was no any registration number written on the document. Deputy prosecutor L. Zaenka told me that the document had not been registered at the Prosecutor's Office. L. Zaenka refused to give comments on who stood behind the check-up on observing the Law about the Presidential Elections of the Republic of Belarus carried out by the Prosecutor's Office”.

On March 29, Mikalai Sharakhan, member of the Polatsk Commission on Presidential Elections was summoned to the local Prosecutor's Office where he was given a written warning for taking part in the work of the Commission under the signature of senior counsellor of Justice of Polatsk city A.M. Kucharenka.

In March, Pavel Burdyka, head of the Polatsk District Commission on Presidential Elections (Vitsebsk region) was summoned to the Prosecutor's Office several times.

On April 1, A.Maroz and V.Vysotski, members of the Verkhniadvinsk District Commission on Presidential Elections were summoned to Criminal Investigation Department. They were asked to give explanations regarding the Commission’s activity.

On April 12 and April 16, official warnings about "inadmissibility of the activities being carried out concerning the presidential elections" were given to the members of the Sharkawshchyna District Commission on Presidential Elections based in Vitsebsk Region) Mikalai Batvinenka and Alexander Strelenka by the Prosecutor’s Office. "In case if you don’t execute the claims stated in the official warning, you can undergo administrative or criminal punishment" – is said in the official warning, signed by the Prosecutor of Sharkawshchyna District H.Karnienka.

j) Arrests of members of Commissions on Presidential Elections and confiscation of the voting bulletins

On 5 May, Uladzimir Baradach, an agent of M.Chyhir, was detained by people in civil near the Freedom Square in Minsk. U.Baradach's "Mercedes" was stopped by police official not far from the building of the French embassy. Immediately after, people wearing civilian clothes appeared and introduced themselves as being the KGB officials. They brought U.Baradach to the Central Administration of Internal Affairs where he spent more than five hours. KGB officials and those of Administration of Internal Affairs searched the car of U.Baradach and confiscated 4.000 copies of leaflets saying "Freedom to Mikhail Chyhir!" They drew up a report for breaking the Article 172 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus (agitation held in a wrong way). In compliance with this Article one can be sentenced up to fifteen days of administrative detention or fined. U.Baradach refused to sign this report. Then he was released.

On May 7, on his way out of the city Gomel vice-Chairman of Gomel Regional Commission Viktrar Yafimaw was detained by a post of the State Road Inspection. 25000 of the voting bulletins were taken away from him.

On May 7, in the morning chairman of the Babruisk Leninski district Commission on Presidential Elections Igar Khadzko and the activist of the electoral campaign Ales Chyhir were detained in Babruisk while spreading posters with information about presidential elections scheduled on May 16. Both of them were taken to the Leninski District Department of Internal Affairs. There they were made to write out explanations while militiamen were drawing up the reports about confiscation of posters and flysheets.

On May 7, flats of Ihar Kiryn, chairman of the Glusk District Commission on Presidential Elections, Yawhen Faletski (vice-chairman) and Genadz Yanushewski (a Commission member) were searched. The search was conducted by members of the Glusk District Department of Internal Affairs with permission of Prosecutor of Glusk District Igar Savastsev. The search was carried out by the Lieutenant Kuzmiankow. It was aimed at confiscation of documentation connected with the presidential elections. The resolution of the Central Election Commission №192 about organisation of presidential elections and the bulletin №5 of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96" "The Right to Freedom" containing the information about persecutions and repressions against members of local Commissions on presidential elections were confiscated. No documents connected with presidential elections were found in the flats of Yanchewski and Faletski.

On May 8, flat of Larysa Dziakava, secretary of the Glusk District Commission on Presidential Elections, was searched. The search was conducted by members of the Glusk

District Department of Internal Affairs with the permission of Prosecutor of Glusk District Igar Savastsew. It was aimed at confiscation of documentation connected with the Presidential Elections. During the search the Resolution of the European Parliament about situation in Belarus, instruction on completion of voting papers, informational announcement about creation of the Glusk District Commission on Presidential Elections were confiscated. It was the sixth search, which was carried out in the flat of the Commission's member.

On May 8, several members of the Magilew district commissions on presidential elections were detained. One of them, Igar Stukalaw, was detained when he was coming out of the building where the Magilew Regional Commission on Presidential Elections was based. For attempt to return back in the building he was accused of "resistance to policemen's legal actions" (Article 166 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus). I.Stukalaw was kept in the Central District Department of Internal Affairs till May 10. On May 10 I.Stukalaw stood the trial and was sentenced to three days of administrative arrest. All the papers concerning the presidential elections were confiscated.

On 8 May, the car with the members of district commissions on presidential elections of the towns of Krychaw and Cherykaw – Syargei Baravikow, Tatsiana Danilava, Syargei Niarowny, Genadz Rawkow – was stopped by policemen led by lieutenant Kuliashow at about 18.00 on the Leninski street in Magilew. Having examined the luggage police officials brought detained people to the Administration of Internal Affairs of the Central district of Magilew City. The car was searched. They confiscated 13.000 copies of documents linked with election campaign. All they were kept more than three hours in the Administration of Internal Affairs without permission to make a call.

On 8 May, Anzhela Bakach, Mikhas Viarbowski and Igar Khadzko, members of the local district commissions on presidential elections of the Babruisk City, were detained by policemen led by captain Uladzimir Kisyalow near bus-station in Magilew. All the materials they had were confiscated (15.000 copies). The detained were taken explanations. They were kept in Administration of Internal Affairs about three hours and were not allowed to make a phone.

On 9 May, Yawgen Murashka, chairman of the Gomel Region Commission on Presidential Elections, was detained in the town of Kalinkavichy (Gomel region). While examining his car policemen found voting-papers as well as other documents connected with election campaign (reports of oblast commission and that of district commissions of Zhytkavichy, Kalinkavichy, Petrykaw, Yelsk, Narawliany, Khoiniki, Rechytsa etc.) On May

10 Ya.Murashka was tried in the court. Court's verdict was as follows: 10 days in administrative detention.

On 9 May, an armed group of policemen (15 people) blocked the headquarters of the Magilew Region Commission on Presidential Elections at about 13.00. They searched it and confiscated all the papers linked with presidential elections – all together 1.400 copies. They drew up a report about confiscation of papers.

On May 9, Anatol Fiodaraw, deputy chairman of the Magilew Region Commission on Presidential Elections, and Aleg Dz'yachkow were detained by policemen near Magilew's bus terminal. Policemen took away from them all the materials concerning the presidential elections. Fiodaraw and Dz'yachkow were kept in charge office for more than three hours. Anatol Fiodaraw didn't stay trial because of his illness, which was appointed on May 11. He submitted to the court a statement in which he asked to put the trial off because of bad health state. The judge considered this action to be a sign of court's disrespect. That's why at midday on May 12, 1999 A.Fiodaraw was detained and taken to the Magilew Leninsky District Court where he was sentenced to three days of administrative arrest for "disrespecting the court".

On May 10, Vasil Prakopchyk and Kanstantsin Myslivets, members of the Drahichyn District Commission on Presidential Elections were detained at 7 p.m. in the town of Drahichyn (Brest region). 10-year-old daughter of Myslivets was also detained with them. 160 voting bulletins were taken away from the Commission's members. Policemen drew up the reports of detention and confiscation of the bulletins. Then they dismissed all the detained people under condition that the Commission's members would go to the District Department of Internal Affairs at 8 a.m. on May 11, 1999.

On May 10, Piatro Zosich and Valery Gnyadzko were detained by armed policemen in the Central Square of the town of Luninets while speaking with the youth (Brest region). Voting bulletins and seal were taken away from them. They were accused of breaking the law on meetings and processions (Article 167 (p.1) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus). On May 11 they stood trial. As a result of the trial Piatro Zosich was sentenced to 10 days of administrative arrest, Valery Hniadzko was fined 1 million roubles.

On May 10, a group of policemen and men wearing civil clothes searched the private printing house "Palimark". Policemen told the workers of the printing house that they were informed about a bomb hidden in the building. The search lasted for three hours. Policemen were obviously more interested in printed materials than in finding a bomb. This search was caused by the order given to members of KGB and policemen to search

for materials connected with the presidential elections scheduled on May 16 and to confiscate them.

i) Warnings to the newspapers "Narodnaya Volya", "Beloruskaya Delovaya Gazeta", "Imya", "Pagonia", "Zgoda" made by the State Committee on Press for publishing information about the presidential elections.

On February 13, the newspapers "Naviny", "Beloruskaya Delovaya Gazeta", "Pagonia" and "Svobodnyie Novosti" and some other independent newspapers that published materials about presidential elections were warned by the State Committee on Press of the RB. The warnings says that publications about presidential elections on behalf of the body which does not exist break an article of the law on press by “calling to unconstitutional seizure of power”. The Re-registration Department of the State Committee on Press pointed out that if the newspapers went on publishing announcements about the elections, they could be closed even without a trial.

On 13 May, a sitting of the Supreme Economic Court of the Republic of Belarus was held in Minsk. There were examined the suits of the independent newspapers against the State Committee on Press. By this action the papers disputed the legal ground of warnings issued by State Committee on Press. The representatives of newspapers applied the Court for postponing its sitting for they were not able to come. The Court did not satisfy the petitioning and launched court hearings without representatives of newspapers. During the trial the judge Boika set no expert opinion though the newspapers were charged by the State Committee on Press with calls for seizure of power. Such was an appraisal given to communications about forthcoming presidential elections in independent press by State Committee on Press.

k) Detentions of members of Election Commissions on May 16.

Aleg Nikulin is reporting, “As a member of the district election commission I was advised to hold the voting on the elections of President of the Republic of Belarus in my village Gurnawshchyna, Kletsk region on the 10th of May. And I did as advised. Our village is rather small and everybody knows me. So when I came to a house with the ballot box nobody got surprised. Everybody knew about the presidential elections being held in the country. But not much was known about the programmes of the candidates for the post. Those who doubted anything crossed both names (as I learned later) but everyone, whose house I visited participated in the elections.

That evening I managed to visit 10 houses. Nineteen people voted. But I didn’t have a possibility to visit all the houses in the village. Several militiamen arrived from the

district centre and announced that they had been informed I was performing “illegal activity”. They took me to Kletsk. They also took the ballot box and two witnesses, who live in the village.

The old woman, one of the witnesses, couldn’t understand why she had been taken and all the way to Kletsk worried a lot, as she was afraid it was for “moon-shine” (alcoholic drink produced privately and illegally). And in militia station she nearly made a scandal trying to prove she wasn’t involved in anything. Sympathising with her I tried to calm her down to explain everything. I told her she was there because of the presidential elections case. Her face changed at once. She rushed to a militia man with words: “Fellows, where is the ballot box? I shall vote now…”

I was questioned in front of the camera. As it turned out they wanted to show a local dissident to KGB in Minsk. The blank voting-papers were confiscated the ballot box was broken up and militia men made a kind of the count. There were 19 bulletins in the box. In seven of them both names had been crossed, ten my fellow-villagers voted for Paznyak and two – for Chygir.

After the questioning I was taken to the District Prosecutor’s Office where Gaidysh A.C., the public prosecutor and a junior counsellor of justice, wrote out an “official warring on the inadmissibility of law infringement”, in which they promised to sue me in accordance with article 166 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus. In words the public prosecutor prohibited to leave the village till the 17th of May threatening to imprison me otherwise. In the evening I was at home. In that way my participation in the Presidential Elections ended.

What conclusions can I draw? Even in the country side people are fed up with the situation in the country. They want changes and they are ready to vote for them. They have realised that the reality of changes depends on them…”

Minsk

On May 16, electors of the Minsk Maskowsky disrtict with the chairman of Strike-committee Syargei Antonchyk and deputy chairman Georgii Mukhin at the head organised a stationary polling station. According to S.Antonchyk the decision of making this polling station was passed by the electors in respond to V.Ganchar who stated that it was impossible to hold presidential election in one day. An old bus was used for this purpose. The voting was carried out in accordance with all procedures provided by the law: there was a room of secret voting in the bus, members of the local Commission on

presidential elections and observers were present. Antonchyk said that for organisation of the polling station only 5 million roubles were spent (approximately $10).

The voting was carried out from 9.30 a.m. to 7.15 p.m. On May 16 in the morning members of the Commission visited flats of citizens and invited them to take part in the elections. Out from 2100 invited people 1180 took part in the voting. Dozens of Belarusan and Foreign journalists as observers supervised the elections as well as representatives of the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus. At 19.15 p.m. the organisers were informed that policemen were going to detain members of the Commission and take the voting bulletins and lists with surnames of electors. At 7.20 p.m. the organisers stopped the elections and hid in the neighbouring house. In two minutes the entrance of the house was blocked by policemen who tried to arrest the organisers and participants of the elections. But they managed to escape and save the documentation.

Grodna

At 11.10 a.m. members of the Grodna district commission Ales Barel and Kazimir Lokits were arrested at the stationary polling station in Karl Marx Street 11, where they conducted the elections. Policemen drew up reports of their arrest, confiscated ballot boxes and 500 voting bulletins. Valiantsin Luchko and Mikola Voran, members of Grodna Region Election Commission who were present as observers at this polling station were also detained. The illegal actions of the policemen were witnessed by the barrister Uladzimir Kisialevich, member of “Viasna-96”.

At 11.30 a.m. members of a local election commission Yawhen Chyhir and Zmitser Kachan, who conducted the elections in an open public polling station in the suburb Farty were arrested. Policemen drew up reports, confiscated ballot boxes and 66 voting bulletins. Kachan’s personal car was searched. As a result 143 more bulletins were taken away from him. The member of the Grodna Region Election Commission Yuras Matsko and the representative of the Belarusan Helsinki Committee Alexander Paradkaw who observed the elections were also detained.

At 13.00 members of local election commission Viktar Sukhi and Mikhas Charnushchyk and Piotr Anisimovich were detained. Policemen drew up reports, confiscated ballot boxes and 1419 voting bulletins.

Workers of "Azot" amalgamation phoned the Grodna Region Election Commission and asked it to provide their constitutional right vote. But when the commission members arrived they were met by policemen who tried to detain them.

The elections were held also in the headquarters of the BPF based in Karl Marx Street, 11. A group of policemen attended the polling station with Mr. Sitnikaw at the head. They tried to impose the Commission's members upon their "guard", telling that unknown person had phoned to a police department and threatened to throw a hand-grenade into the polling station. The Commission's members refused to be "guarded" by policemen.

In Grodna entrances of all hostels were guarded by policemen who told that access to the hostels was limited by the City Executive Committee because of the presidential elections.

Slonim

Adam Yorsh and Ales Masiuk were arrested at 11 a.m. who conducting the elections at the out-doors public polling station. Policemen drew up the reports and confiscated ballot boxes as well as voting bulletins.

Masty

Mikhas Gladukhaw and Yazep Palubyatka were arrested while conducting the elections. Policemen drew up reports of their arrest, confiscated ballot boxes as well as voting bulletins.

Zelva

Seven policemen with the head of Propaganda District of the Region's Executive Committee burst into Yuras Kachuk's flat, where a polling station was based. They confiscated ballot box and voting bulletins, tried to force I. Kachuk to write out explanations of what was going on in his flat. They also gave him a call-up paper to interrogation.

Polatsk

Polatsk Commission on presidential elections started working at 4 p.m. for a lack of finance. Stationary polling station was opened. Soon the police colonel Rabchynski came there with a film-operator that filmed the voting point. In some time deputy chairman of the Town Executive Committee A.Machulovich appeared. In 10 minutes a special group of policemen with colonel Aliskovich at head burst into the room. All the people who were in the room were detained even the electors. The ballot box with voting bulletins, lists of electors and independent newspapers were confiscated. The members of Election Commission M.Bawtovich, V.Stukhaw, U.Muchanka, M.Sharak were detained and brought to the local Department of Internal Affairs. Then policemen drew up reports of

their detention and gave them subpoenas to come to the Department of Internal Affairs on May 17.

Results of the Presidential Elections

The resolution №194 “About results of presidential elections in Belarus” passed by the Central Election Commission on May 18, 1999 says:

To admit the results of presidential elections and consider them to be invalid because of violations, which took place during pre-election campaign and elections themselves:

- State authorities put obstacles in opposition’s way to hold the presidential elections and to realise the citizens’ right to free election of their President;

- Absence of the possibilities to discuss openly the electoral programs of the candidates for presidential office;

- Absence of the right to free agitation for and against the candidates;

On Press Conference devoted to the results of presidential elections chairman of the Central Election Committee Viktar Ganchar called the conditions under which the election were conducted to be “anomalous”. He meant first of all mass repressions against people engaged in work of commissions of different levels. But in spite of obstacles – pointed out Viktar Ganchar – people did impossible thing.

According to Adrian Severin "elections were the political event which gave possibility to make certain conclusions". A.Severin beilives that Belarusan authorities and opposition will positively use this event for beginning of serious and constructive negotiations for finding way out of the Constitutional crisis. The OSCE paid special attention to facts of persecution and counteractions, which accompanied the process of the elections. Adrian Severin stated that "detention of one of the candidates for the presidential office must be stopped immediately". "Taking into account the obstacles done by the Belarusan authorities we did not expect them to meet standards of the OSCE" – said Mr. Severin.

During campaign of presidential elctions the Belarusan authorities were not along that violated the law. To our mind all main parties to the elections did breached the law. For instance, the Central election Commission V.Ganchar at the head didn’t conduct the examination of authenticity of the signatures, which were collected for M.Chyhir and Z.Paznyak, though the claims to conduct such examination in written form were

expressed by Paznyak's representatives. In the course of collecting signatures for M.Chygir and Zyanon Paznyak the latter violated the law by launching his campaign before he was registered as a candidate. In particular, he repeatedly expressed his attitude towards M.Chyhir on Russian TV and press.

On the eve of elections the rights of the major part of Belarusan citizens were violated. The matter is that the Commissions on the Presidential Elections:

1. Didn't make up lists of electors and had not printed the necessary amount of the voting bulletins.

2. Stationary voting points were not organized and the electors were not informed about the places where they could vote.

3. Members of the commissions who carried the portable ballot boxes to citizens' flats were uncontrolled.

4. Electors had no information where they could appeal to invite members of commissions with portable ballot boxes in order to vote.

State authorities with the help of such institutions as prosecutor's offices, police, KGB and other constantly persecuted the members of election commissions of different levels. As a matter of fact everybody engaged in the activities of the Region, District and City Commissions was summoned to the Prosecutor's Office and to the KGB where they were officially warned "about inadmissibility of further violations of the law and possibility to draw them to criminal or administrative responsibility ". According to the "Law on the Prosecutor's Office" warning is one of the kinds of the Prosecutor's responses. The figure of people warned in Belarus during the election campaign is about 1000. The Human Rights Centre "Viasna" received many communications about numerous persecutions of people for taking part in the activities of commissions on presidential elections. Many people were brought to administrative punishment under the article 167 (p.3) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus for collecting signatures.

HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE "VIASNA"

Valery Shchukin actively participates in the trials when the authorities try to use the court as a repression tool against opposition members and those who have different view points. Valery Alyakseevich Shchukin is in favour of democratic principles of open society in the mass media.

V.Shchukin is a deputy of the 13th Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Belarus. He is a secretary of the Supreme Soviet commission on national security, defence and struggle against criminality. As an active participant of the opposition-organised actions Valery Shchukin is permanently subjected to repressions from the authorities part that are eager to intimidate him and interfere with his human rights activities.

I. The administrative trials over Valery Shchukin:

1. 13.05.1997 – the Minsk Central district court (judge A.Bragin) – a fine 22.5 million roubles ($847);

2. 30.05.1997 – the Minsk Kastrychnitski district court (judge Ryshtowskaya) – a fine 1 million roubles ($38);

3. 14.07.1997 – the Minsk Central district court (judge T.Zlobich) – a fine 23 million roubles ($852);

4. 24.09.1997 – the Minsk Leninski district court (judge T.Zhulkowskaya) – a fine 30 million roubles ($1092);

5. 22.12.1997 – the Minsk Savetski district court (judge L.Tamanaw) – 400.000 roubles ($13);

6. 23.01.1998 – the Minsk Central district court (judge A.Barysionak) – a fine 1.5 million roubles ($49);

7. 03.07.1998 – the Minsk Maskowski district court (judge Zh.Lyavitskaya) – a fine 5 million roubles ($138);

8. 29.01.1991 – the Minsk Central district court (judge A.Barysionak) – a fine 75 million roubles ($701).

Up to December 1, 1999 they imposed a total fine 158.4 million roubles ($3.725).

Including:

- five trials in 1997 and a total fine 76.9 million roubles ($2842);

- two trials in 1998 and a total fine 6.5 million roubles ($182);

- one trial in 1999 and a fine 75 million roubles ($701).

II. Administrative detentions:

1. 29.12.1997 – the Minsk Central district court (judge A.Barysionak) – 10 days;

2. 15.06.1998 – the Minsk Central district court (judge A.Barysionak) – 10 days;

3. 07.12.1998 – the Minsk Partyzanski district court (judge N.Trubnikaw) – 15 days;

4. 11.01.1999 – the Minsk Savetski district court (judge A.Gancharyk) – 10 days;

5. 16.02.1999 – the Minsk Central district court (judge A.Barysionak) – 3 days;

6. 05.05.1999 – the Minsk Savetski district court (judge I.Sheyka) – 5 days;

7. 22.07.1999 – the Minsk Leninski district court (judge D.Zhdanok) – 15 days (just 8 of them were served).

Totally Valery Shchukin spent behind bars 61 days and nights up to December 1, 1999.

Including:

- one arrest in 1997 – 10 days;

- two arrests in 1998 – 25 day;

- four arrests in 1999 – 33 days.

III. Criminal detentions:

1. 19.10.1999 – the Minsk prosecutor's office (deputy prosecutor L.Litvinyuk) – 2 months (61 days in detention).

In fact he spent 13 days in detention up to December 1, 1999.

Total term of declared arrests is 129 days, in fact illegal term of imprisonment is 74 days and nights.

IV. Official prosecutor's warnings:

1. 18.03.1999 – Republic of Belarus' prosecutor's office (prosecutor A.Lazuta) – for throwing light in the press on tortures in the Belarusan charge offices.

V. Total number of persecutions:

For the last three years Valery Shchukin has been subjected to administrative, prosecutor's and criminal persecutions 17 times for human rights, political, professional (he is a journalist) and parliamentarian activities.

Including:

- six times in 1997;

- four times in 1998;

- seven times in 1999.

Without Supreme Soviet sanctions, breaking Valery Shchukin's deputy's immunity, without writs they caught Valery Shchukin in the streets, detained him in his working place, got him from the bed, violently took him to the charge offices, interrogated and drew up charge sheets (including nights)… 25 times from 1997 to 1999.

They subjected Valery Shchukin to ill-treatment 5 times (in the Central, Leninski and Savetski charge offices).

They stole Valery Shchukin up from the hospital while he was there on out-patient treatment. It happened on 31 December 1998. A group of militiamen stole Valery Shchukin up from clinical hospital №9 right before the New Year and literally dragged him to the judge to charge him and to put behind bars before the New Year.

Syargei Antonchyk

A worker of Minsk plant "Belvar" Syargei Antonchyk was elected deputy of the Supreme Soviet of 12th convocation in 1990. In the parliament he was a member of the opposition faction of the Belarusan Popular Front "Adradzhennie." In 1994 he headed parliamentarian anti-corruption commission. Prepared by this commission report the authorities forbade publishing in the press. As a result the biggest State newspapers "Zviazda," "Sovetskaya Belorussiya," "Respublika" and others came out with big white spots on their pages where the report of the commission was to be published. Ivan Tsitsyankow – the head of presidential administration – brought an action against S.Antonchyk. Such a trial couldn't be objective. And the action of I.Tsitsyankow was satisfied. Syargei Antonchyk was fined 200 million roubles – an enormous sum of money at that time. In order to cover this sum of money a property belonging to S.Antonchyk's family was confiscated.

Syargei Antonchyk keeps on fighting with the regime. In 1999 he took part in the preparation work for presidential elections to be. He was many times arrested, penalised and put behind bars for his attempts to unite all the workers of the country.

Barys Khamaida

Barys Khanonavich Khamaida's political activity is closely connected with human rights defence. Barys Khanonavich was elected chairman of the Vitsebsk elector club "Vyabar" for democratic elections in 1990. The principal aim of the members of this club was defence of the citizens' right to elect on the democratic basis deputies of the different kinds of institutions and the president. Barys Khamaida is an editor-in-chief of the independent newspaper "Vybar" since 1992. The main direction of the newspaper "Vybar" is becoming fighting against corruption and criminal Soviet power, for human rights to live in prosperity and to be free, for rebirth of Belarusan national culture. Barys Khamaida held a seminar under the title "Criminal Soviet power and methods of fighting against it" in the club "Vybar." The seminar materials were published on the pages of the newspaper "Vybar." He more than a year published "Black book of the crimes committed by the Soviet power in Vitsebsk region." These publications drew authorities' attention. And as a result the newspaper was banned in V.Kebich times. During Lukashenka's ruling the authorities many times instituted criminal proceedings against this newspaper and against B.Khamaida. but in spite of that B.Khamaida keeps on publishing this newspaper and by this he is defending the authors' rights to express their opinions and the readers right to receive deferent information. Following the publication of the verse "Kill the President!" by Slavamir Adamovich on the pages of "Vybar" a criminal case was instituted against the newspaper. Investigation on this case lasted almost for a year. B.Khamaida won this case in the court. Currently B.Khamaida is being charged with disrespecting and humiliating honour and dignity of A.Lukashenka. The matter is the he began publication of the book "Bullet for the President" by Uladzimir Padgol on the pages of the newspaper "Vybar."

On 19 December Barys Khamaida was severely beaten up near his hose in Vitsebsk. There is nobody to blame of course.

Defence of the independent press has been a core matter of Barys Khamaida's activities last years. One can see him almost every day in the centre of Vitsebsk with a picket in support of independent press with a placard "Independent Press." Thus Vitsebsk residents can easily buy any independent newspaper. He was more than 100 times arrested and brought to the local charge office; he was fined 150 million roubles, and was forced to spend 53 days behind bars.

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